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JACK SCOTT IN TEXAS; OR,

WILLET

THE WHITE WOLF



TENNIE COULD NOT REPRESS A CRY OF TERROR. WAS IT A WILD ANIMAL OR A MADMAN.

Jack Scott in Texas;

OR,

THE WHITE WOLF.

BY EDWARD WILLETT,

AUTHOR OF "BILL ROBBINS, HUNTER," "SILVER-SPUR," "ALONE ON THE PLAINS," "THE BOY CRUISERS," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A STRANGER IN REDWOOD.

ON a bright June morning a solitary stranger rode into Redwood.

Redwood, although the Texans called it a town, was not so much as a village, hardly even a hamlet. It was composed of a store, a blacksmith's shop, a saddler's shop, a "grocery," where liquor was sold, one rather nice frame house, and about half a dozen shanties. Redwood was chiefly devoted to loafing, drinking, gambling, horse-racing, cock-fighting, and free white fighting. To a person who could not be interested by such amusements, Redwood was a very uninteresting place.

The stranger who rode into town that bright June morning, was not one of the loafers of Redwood, nor a resident of the adjoining country. His appearance showed that he belonged to another class, and that he had come from another clime.

He was a man of twenty-four or five, a little above the medium height, well made and sinewy, with a handsome and good face—a face full of determination, courage and courtesy—the face of a gentleman. He had blue eyes and light hair and a slender mustache and a goatee adorned his upper lip and his chin. He was neatly dressed in a serviceable suit of dark and stout cloth, and wore upon his head a common black felt hat, slightly drawn down over his brows. He carried a rifle at his saddle-bow and a pistol at his belt.

There was Redwood, dusty, dirty, uninviting, unpleasant. In the middle of the road was a game of marbles, in which nearly a dozen men and boys were engaged. A dozen or so more were variously grouped in front of the long and low store and the dingy grocery, watching the game and talking among themselves. A few lazy negroes, sunning themselves in spots, with a superabundance of dogs, finish the scene.

Rough and wild-looking were those Redwoodites, for the most part, and their talk was as rough as their appearance. It was chiefly horse talk, just at that time, and several men were considerably excited about it; but all occupation and conversation were suspended when the stranger came down the road, looking like something newer, fresher, fairer and finer than the specimens of male humans that were usually seen in that region.

It was the stranger's horse, rather than his personal appearance, that attracted the admiring attention of the lookers-on at Redwood. He rode as if he had been born to the saddle, a dark-brown mare, clean-limbed, bright-eyed, and perfectly formed, whose gait and manner spoke of high spirit and splendid action. All her

points were carefully noted and sagaciously commented upon, as she slowly trotted into town.

"There's a horse that will beat the gray mustang!" said a good-looking but dark-featured young man, who was dressed with more pretension to neatness and style than the others exhibited.

"There's the horse that will beat the gray mustang! I have been waiting for that mare, and she has come just when I wanted her."

"You're talkin' wild, Lee Crozier," replied a heavily-built, red-faced man. "Can't you see that that mar' has got too much daylight under her? Her long legs will cover a good deal of ground, I allow; but she hain't got the hold-out to run a mile ag'in my gray."

"Business is business, Joe Jaypert, and a bet is a bet. I bet you that I would have a horse here to-day, which would beat your gray mustang, and I meant to keep my word or lose the money. When Fleetfoot gave out, I thought I was stumped, and was almost ready to settle; but that mare has come along, just in time, and I mean to run her against the gray and beat him. You can have a chance, if you like, to make another fifty on the race."

"Twould be jest like robbing you, Lee, and I don't want to do that. The mar' won't stand no show with my gray."

"Here is the money. You can cover it or not, just as you please."

"I'll cover it, of course. I ain't apt to let sech a chance slip. Simon, will you hold the stakes?"

The money was put in the hands of the grocery-keeper, and the attention of all was again concentrated upon the mare, whose rider had halted in front of the store, which he entered as if he had business there.

"Let us go and look at the mare, and see what condition she is in," said Crozier. "If she needs rest or feed, she must have it. We've got the day before us, and I am not obliged to run her until I get ready."

"All right," replied Jaypert. "Any time today."

The two principals stepped to where the mare was hitched, in front of the store. Crozier removed her saddle and blanket, and the others examined her teeth, felt of her muscles, and praised or depreciated her points as they saw fit.

"She ain't a day over six years old, if she's that," remarked one of Crozier's friends. "She has been well treated, too, and I believe that she is sound in wind and limb."

"She will do," replied Crozier. "The gray mustang will meet his match this time."

"Young or old," said Jaypert, "she ain't no match for the gray, and I don't claim that he is under nine."

As yet there had been no consultation with the owner of the mare, nor had any one suggested the propriety of asking him whether he would allow her to be run in a race. Either they took his consent as a matter of course, or considered it a point of such small consequence that it was not worth inquiring about.

But he soon got an inkling of what was going on. From the interior of the store he could see that the saddle had been removed from his

mare, and that a crowd was standing about her, examining her and talking about her.

He walked to the door, to learn what these proceedings meant.

The mare whinnied when she saw him, and the crowd fell back a little at his approach—all but Crozier, who stood at the horse's head, with his hand on the bridle.

The stranger took in the situation at a glance, and spoke courteously, but firmly without addressing himself to any particular person in the crowd.

"I am much obliged to you, gentlemen, for taking the saddle and blanket off of my mare; but I could have attended to that matter myself, if I had supposed that it needed attending to."

"No harm is done, I hope," said Crozier. "The mare is all right. Haven't been riding her hard lately; have you?"

"No. She has had a long journey, but has taken it easy, and is not at all worsted. Why do you ask?"

"I wanted to know whether she is in condition to run a mile for money."

"Her condition is good enough, I suppose; but I have no idea of running her."

"I have, though. My money is up on her, and I have entered her to run a mile, to-day, against a gray mustang that belongs to this gentleman"—pointing at Jaypert.

"Indeed! I should have supposed that you would have thought proper to ask my consent, before making any such bet or bargain. As you have not seen fit to do so, I shall put my veto on the proceeding."

"I hope, stranger, that you are not going to spoil sport," said Crozier, changing his tone a little. "That gray mustang of Joe Jaypert's has won every race in these parts. I bet that I would produce a horse here to-day which would beat him. I was relying on a mare of mine; but she has unfortunately been foaled, and I had nearly given the thing up, when I caught sight of this mare of yours. I am sure that she can beat the mustang, and it would please you, I hope, to see her win the race."

The stranger's temper was somewhat mollified by this explanation but not to the extent of permitting his horse to be used in the manner mentioned.

"If you had come at me in a different way," he said, "perhaps I might have been disposed to accommodate you; but the style in which you have attempted to take possession of my property don't suit me. I have nothing to do with your races, and don't mean to be forced into them. I own this mare, and expect to control her as long as she is my property."

The idea of abandoning the race was one which the people of Redwood could not possibly entertain. A general murmur of disapprobation followed the remarks of the stranger.

Lee Crozier flushed with anger. It was his opinion that his explanation ought to be considered sufficient, and that the stranger was unwarrantably willing to "spoil sport."

"As you own the mare and expect to control her," he said, "what do you expect to do with her just now?"

"I intend to replace the blanket and saddle

that have been removed from her, and to mount her and go about my business."

"I don't like to be rough on a stranger," said Crozier, speaking quite deliberately; "but you have had a fair chance to do the liberal thing, and you have no right to be pig-headed about it. I am obliged to inform you that you won't be allowed to do what you propose to do. The race has got to be run, and we must have the mare. If any damage should be done to her, I am responsible for it."

The stranger looked around upon the crowd but saw no expression favorable to himself.

"Do you call this treating a stranger civilly?" he asked. "Where I came from a man has the right to do as he pleases with his own property. I would like to know whether I am to have fair play in this town, whether a stranger has any rights which you are willing to respect."

"It's just as Lee Crozier says," remarked Jaypert. "The race is bound to be run, and we must have the mare."

"Very well. I am only one man, and there are many of you against me; but I will defend my right to my property while I live. I would rather die than be run over in this style. I know there isn't the least chance for me, if you all pile on me; but it will be sure death to the first man who lays his hand on that mare to take her away from here."

The stranger raised his rifle, and pistols and other weapons were visible among the crowd. The stranger stood with his back to the store, so that he could not be reached by a rear or flank movement. If he should prove to be quick on the trigger, he would be able to execute his threat, although he might be riddled with bullets the next instant. His determination was apparent, the purpose of the crowd was equally plain, and there was a fair prospect for a brilliant and sanguinary engagement, although it would necessarily be brief and one-sided.

The situation was suddenly changed, by the appearance upon the scene of an unexpected party.

CHAPTER II.

THE RACE.

The party who unexpectedly appeared was a female party—in fact nothing less attractive than a handsome girl of twenty, or thereabout, with dark hair and brown eyes, and a fresh, healthy complexion. She was riding a beautiful spotted mustang, and came dashing recklessly among the crowd, scattering them to the right and left, and reined up her horse at the side of the stranger's brown mare.

Surprise and vexation were in the expression of Lee Crozier's countenance as he looked up at her. The stranger's gaze was one of undisguised admiration.

"Good-morning to you, Cousin Kate," said Crozier. "Don't you think that you might get into trouble, if you should run over a few of these free and independent citizens?"

"What is this fuss about?" she asked, without noticing his question. "What is the matter here?"

"Nothing of any consequence. Nothing that

concerns you, at least. Just ride along, my dear, and don't bother us."

"I'll not do it," she replied, directing her words to Crozier, but her glances to the stranger. "I want to know what this means. It looks as if you have all joined against one man, and that man a stranger. There's nothing like fair-play. What has he done?"

"Nothing at all, my dear cousin. It is what he won't do that raises the difficulty. He chooses to be as obstinate as a mule, and we mean to make him listen to reason."

"Own up, Lee, and tell me how you are trying to impose upon him. Pistols and knives are very convincing; but I don't consider them the right kind of reason."

"There's no imposition about it, Kate; but I suppose we can't get rid of you unless I explain the whole matter. You know that I had agreed to find a horse to run against Jaypert's gray mustang to-day, or pay forfeit. You know that I had expected to run Fleetfoot, and she is foundered. We were talking the matter over, when the stranger came riding into town on this mare. I spotted the mare at once, as the very horse I wanted, and entered her and bet on her. Then the stranger comes out, while we were examining the mare, and says that we sha'n't run her on any terms, just because we had made the thing up before we asked his consent. I tried to reason with him; but he stuck to what he said, and vowed that he would fight for the mare. Here she is, Kate Isn't she a beauty?"

"A beauty!" exclaimed Kate. "That's no name for it. She is just heavenly! I do believe she can beat the gray, and would give any thing to see her do it. That wretched mustang beat my Spot, and I lost twenty dollars on the race, and haven't had money enough to buy a decent dress. He has been beating every thing in the country, and I do think that the conceit ought to be taken out of him somehow."

She turned to the stranger, with a gesture and an expression of piteous entreaty.

"Oh, sir, do please let her run! I would be so glad to see her beat that gray, and she is such a beauty, and I do believe she can do it. I can't express what a favor it will be to me, if you will let her run."

The stranger grounded his rifle, raised his hat, and bowed gracefully to the fair creature on the spotted horse.

"As the lady wishes it," he said, "I will gladly permit my mare to run, and will see to it that she does her duty in the race."

This settlement of the difficulty was received with demonstrations of approval from the crowd and with the sweetest of smiles from the lady.

Lee Crozier's dark face grew darker, and he looked as if he disapproved of the lady's gracious manner toward the stranger, and of the stranger's open admiration of the lady. But his scowl soon faded away, and he extended his hand to the stranger.

"I hope you will have no hard feelings toward me, sir, or toward any of the rest of us," he said. "We have not meant to treat you uncivilly. Perhaps you and I look at this sort of thing in different lights."

"Perhaps we do. I bear you no ill-will, as the difficulty is at an end, and we will let it pass."

"Hadn't I better take your mare over to Colonel Cundiff's stable, and give her a feed and a rubbing-down?"

"I don't think she needs it."

"She ought to be in first-class condition to run against the gray mustang. He is no slouch, I assure you."

"Can I see him?"

"I suppose so. Will you bring him down, Mr. Jaypert?"

The red-faced man did as he was requested to do, and the stranger was soon inspecting the gray mustang. That much-talked-of animal was a large, big-boned horse, gaunt and clumsy in appearance, but with eyes that were full of slumbering fire. His sinews and chest told of great strength and endurance, such as might easily decide a long race, if properly brought out and used.

The stranger examined him thoroughly, with the air of a man who understands the points of a horse.

"How long is the course?" he asked Crozier.

"A mile."

"I don't think you need trouble yourself about my mare. The horse is no slouch, as you say, but I believe she will run away from him."

"Very well. You ought to know best. I will send for my black boy to ride her. You will find him a good hand."

"Never mind that. I will ride her myself."

"That will be just throwing away the chances. Jaypert will have a little nigger to ride the gray, and the mare can't afford to carry your weight."

"Please don't throw away any chances!" pleaded the lady. "I do so want to see the mare win the race."

"As the mare is mine," persisted the stranger, "I must use her to suit myself, and I am not in the habit of throwing away chances. Do you think, Mr. Crozier, that she stands a chance to lose?"

"I am afraid she does, if she is to carry your weight."

"I would like to know what the owner of the gray thinks about it."

"I believe that my horse will win the race easy," said Jaypert. "If you are to ride the mare, I am sure of it. I don't want any thing better than that."

"I will bet you five hundred dollars that my mare wins this race."

"If I had that much money with me, stranger, I would jump at the offer."

"That is just the amount I have, and I want to bet it all or none. You can find some one to back you I suppose."

The proprietor of the Redwood store said that he was willing to guarantee Joe Jaypert to the amount of five hundred dollars, and the stranger put a roll of bills in the merchant's hands. He then announced that he was ready for the race.

The course was on the open prairie; but it was level, and the ground was in good condition. The horses were to run as they pleased, from the starting-place to a solitary tree in the distance; to turn the tree, and to come back as they pleased.

The judges were selected, the starting-place

was pointed out, and the riders got into their saddles, the stranger mounting his mare, and an active little negro boy climbing on top of the gray mustang, his black and diminutive figure presenting a strange contrast to the stately form of the white rider.

"Be careful what you are about," whispered Crozier, at the last. "The further that gray goes, the faster he gets."

The stranger nodded, and the word was given.

Both horses had an excellent send off, the gray leading at a swinging pace, and the mare following with long and graceful strides. Her motion was so light and easy, that her hoofs hardly seemed to touch the ground. The horse kept the lead, however, and his pace grew swifter as he warmed up to his work, while the mare did not seem to gain upon him an inch.

In this manner the first half-mile was run, Lee Crozier's face wearing a look of anxiety, and the few partisans of the mare appearing to be much disappointed at her performance.

At the tree, the horse stumbled, in making a short turn, but quickly recovered himself, and pressed on toward the starting-point with greater speed than ever. The mare swept around the tree in an easier but wider circle, and started on the homestretch at a considerable distance behind her competitor.

As Crozier had predicted, the speed of the gray increased continually, and the mare made but little effort to narrow the distance between them, until about half the homestretch had been passed over. Then the stranger could be seen to lift his bridle-rein and to lean slightly forward in his saddle.

Suddenly the mare "lit out," like an arrow shot from a bow, and a wild yell arose from the spectators as she seemed fairly to fly over the course, until she was nearly at his side. In another instant she had passed him, and was a head and neck beyond him on her way to the goal. In vain the small African lashed the gray with his riding-whip, and yelled as if he would split his lungs; the mare was well ahead, and going at a pace which Redwood had never yet witnessed. Her rider did not attempt to hold her in or urge her on, but sat there like a statue, as she dashed across the starting line, fully three lengths ahead of the gray mustang.

Then she slacked her speed, and the stranger cantered her up to the store, where he dismounted, removed his saddle and blanket, and rubbed her down with a whisp of straw which he took from a crockery crate. All the spectators had followed him, without stopping to notice the condition of the gray, and among the first came the lady.

"What do you call your mare, sir?" she asked.

"Her name is Flora," replied the stranger.

"That is a pretty name; but I think you ought to call her Whirlwind, or Spirit of the Wind, or Lightning, or something that would express her swiftness. Why, she is a wonder! I never saw anything like her. Oh, she is such a dear beauty!"

"Would you sell her?" inquired Crozier.

"I would as soon sell myself," was the stranger's reply

"Do you expect to remain here?" asked the lady.

"A few days, perhaps. I have some business to transact—some inquiries to make in the neighborhood—and I don't know how much time it may take."

"You must come out to my uncle's house—Captain Crozier's. He will be glad to see you, I know. There is no place to stop at, here in Redwood, and I am so anxious to ride that mare! Lee, you will bring this gentleman out with you, won't you, now?"

She looked at her cousin as she spoke; but he was not listening to her. He was otherwise engaged.

CHAPTER III.

LAST CHANCE.

IT was an unusual occurrence that had engaged the attention of Lee Crozier—the arrival of an Indian, an unmistakable red-man, arrayed in blankets and leggins and moccasins, with nothing on his head but his long, straight black hair. There was no paint upon his brown face, which was expressive of nothing at all unless of that entire absence of expression which is called stolidity or impassibility.

This aborigine had dismounted from a rugged little pony, and he walked through the crowd, without noticing the stares that were directed at him, right up to Lee Crozier, whom he touched upon the shoulder, and whispered something to him, in words which would not be understood by the others.

Crozier seemed to be perplexed and troubled. He frowned as he looked at his cousin and the stranger, and muttered something that caused the Indian to shake his head. Then he stepped to his cousin, and whispered in her ear. She made no reply, and he turned away, mounted the horse, and joined the Indian on his pony, and they rode away together.

The lady also appeared to be perplexed and uneasy. She looked anxiously after her cousin for a few moments, and then turned toward the stranger, who had just received from the Redwood merchant the roll of bills which he had handed him, and was listening to his statement that he would collect the amount of Joe Jaypert's bet, and pay it over in a few days.

"My cousin has been called away," she said, "and has left to me the duty and pleasure of inviting you to his father's house. If you will accept the invitation, I will show you the way, and that ought to be something of an inducement."

"The greatest inducement possible," gallantly replied the young man, though he could not help thinking that Crozier, if he really intended to give the invitation, might have spoken of it before he started. "I gladly accept the invitation, and hope that you and your relatives will not be glad to get rid of me when you have become acquainted with me."

"We are willing to take that risk. If you are ready sir, we will start now."

"Permit me to assist you," he said, as she was about to mount her horse.

"I don't need any assistance. I can play a lone hand at getting on horseback, if nothing else."

With two white hands she seized the bow and hook of her saddle, made a spring, and vaulted into her seat.

"There, sir! What do you think of that? You couldn't do it, riding as you do. Whoa, Spot! You know that I havn't got my foot in the stirrup yet."

The stranger quickly mounted, and took his place at her side, gazing at her with an amused smile; but there was something more than amusement in the look with which he regarded her.

Neither spoke until they had got away from Redwood, out of ear-shot of the spectators of the horse-race, who were looking after them as they rode away. Then the lady took the word.

"My name is Kate Crozier. What is yours?"

"My name? It is Last Chance."

"Last Chance! Well, that is funny. But I didn't ask your nickname, sir,"—this with some dignity.

"It is not a nickname, Miss Crozier, I assure you, but my real name. I came of a large family of Chances. There are many brothers and sisters of us, and my father, hoping that I would be the end of the tribe, gave me the name of Last. Thus it is that I am named Last Chance."

"That is so queer! I am afraid you can never go to Congress under that name. But you came very near going out of the world this morning. I do believe that they would have made an end of you, if the affair hadn't turned out as it did. Some of those Redwood fellows are just mean and cowardly enough to do that."

"Your cousin is not one of that style, I hope."

"No; I don't think that Lee is mean or cowardly; but he is passionate and revengeful. I am afraid of him, sometimes, myself."

The young man's face brightened. He had probably reached the conclusion that Kate Crozier was not in love with her cousin, whatever her cousin's feelings might be toward her, and this reflection seemed to give him pleasure.

"Perhaps I was too quick to take offense," he said. "I suppose there would have been something of a fight, if you hadn't come in time to prevent it, and it is possible that I owe you my life."

"I don't know but you do, and perhaps some of the others owe me their lives, too. But I don't like to think about it, and would rather speak of something else. I hope that your business in this country will not bring you into any more such scrapes."

"I hope it won't; but I will be likely to follow it, wherever it may lead me. I will have to look after some lands, and perhaps I may invest in cattle. Do you know any thing of a man, somewhere in these parts, named Wiley Simmes?"

The effect of this question upon Kate Crozier was astonishing. She suddenly turned pale, and then the blood rushed to her face in a torrent. At first she glanced at her companion, with a half-scared, bewildered look, and then turned her face away, as if to hide it from his gaze.

"Wiley Simmes?" she repeated, in a dazed and frightened manner. "Yes—I have heard of him. There is such a man somewhere in these

parts. Why do you ask me about Wiley Simmes?"

"I have heard that a man of that name is an extensive cattle-dealer, or herder, or one who has control of cattle, and it is likely that my business may bring me in connection with him. I thought that you might have heard of him, and that you might be able to tell me whether he lives anywhere hereabout."

"Yes—I have heard of him," said she again, dwelling on each word, as if she felt it necessary to be careful what she said. "I have heard of him, and who hasn't? I hope that your business may not bring you in collision or connection with him."

"Why so? Is he one of the dangerous characters?"

"I am afraid he is, one of the most dangerous. But I ought not to say any thing about him, I suppose, as I do not really know any thing of my own knowledge. He does not associate with other white men. Indeed, I believe that there is no love lost between him and other Texans. I have heard him spoken of as an outlaw, as one whose dealings in cattle consist in taking possession of cattle that don't belong to him. But this is only hearsay. He may be a very good man. I hope he is, God knows!"

The young man looked at his companion as if he would like to read her heart and search out her secrets. He could not account for her emotion at the mention of the name of Wiley Simmes, for the cautious and contradictory manner in which she spoke of him, for her evident horror of the reputed outlaw, and her fervent hope that he was not as bad as he was supposed to be. There was more in her demeanor and her words than was apparent to the eye and the ear, and he wished that he might fathom the mystery.

"If Mr. Simmes has such a reputation," he said, "I must be careful how I have dealings with him. Does he live far from here?"

"I can't say. Somewhere in the hills, I believe, but I don't know. I do hope that you won't go near him or attempt to find him."

The girl turned upon her companion such an appealing look, that he felt himself a scoundrel for having provoked her to such a display of emotion.

"I was only asking as a matter of curiosity," he said. "As he is such an unpleasant subject, let us speak of something else."

They did speak of something else, and spoke pleasantly and well; at least, each was highly pleased with the nature and manner of the other's speech; and the time passed rapidly until they came in sight of the Crozier mansion. It was a large, one storied building, with a veranda on two sides, and numerous outbuildings scattered around. It was situated on a ridge, or swell of the prairie, near the edge of a belt of heavy timber, of which the site of the house had once formed a part, as was evidenced by the shade trees that were left standing, and the stumps of those that had been cut down.

The young man was ushered into the mansion by Kate Crozier, and was introduced to her uncle, an elderly gentleman, with the appearance and manner of a well-to-do farmer or herder. To him Kate told the story of the race, with all its accompaniments, and he was so sur-

prised and delighted, that he shook the stranger's hand heartily, and gave him a most cordial welcome.

"I wouldn't have missed hearing this for a herd of cattle," he said, "and it is a great honor and pleasure to me to be allowed to entertain that mare and her owner at my house. You shall both have the best the plantation affords, and you must make yourselves perfectly at home, and I hope you will let me see what the mare can do, when she has had her feed and rest."

Cordial as Captain Crozier's greeting was, there were two matters that gave him trouble and uneasiness, detracting somewhat from his gratification at receiving his visitor.

The name of his guest—Last Chance—appeared to strike him strangely and unpleasantly, and he was hardly satisfied with the young man's explanation of the manner in which he acquired his singular baptismal appellation. He looked at Chance closely, again and again, and evidently regarded him with a sort of suspicion, which he could not easily shake off.

He was also strangely annoyed, if not actually irritated, when Kate related how and by whom her cousin had been called away from Redwood. He spoke to her on the subject in a whisper, seeming to be not at all relieved by the answers she gave him, and there was a constraint in his manner, as well as a cloud on his countenance, during the remainder of the day.

With Last Chance, however, the afternoon passed away very pleasantly, and he was not at all rejoiced when the day came to an end. He went with Captain Crozier to visit the mare, and told her age and pedigree, and gave a sample of her action. With Kate he wandered over the grounds, taking far greater pleasure in seeing and hearing her, than in anything else he saw and heard.

He soon discovered that Kate was the female head of the house, Captain Crozier being a widower with only one son. The duties of Kate's position did not permit her to bestow all her time upon the guest, and he was forced to find solace in the society of the old gentleman, who struck him as being extremely cautious, almost to the verge of timidity, in everything he did and said. His demeanor, in fact, was so different from that of most men of his station and manner of life, that the young man was persuaded that there must be some mystery connected with the family, and his curiosity naturally prompted him to wonder what it was.

No solution of the mystery, if there was any mystery, presented itself, and he was finally shown to the room that he was to occupy for the night.

It was evidently one of the best rooms in the house, and was well furnished; but there was nothing peculiar about it. He examined it pretty thoroughly, without finding any thing that specially attracted his attention, with the exception of an old family Bible, which he casually looked into. It opened at a family register, but the register did not seem to have been used.

Yes—there was one record. Under the head of marriages he read this entry:

"March 21, 18—, Wiley Simmes and Ella Crozier."

"So!" he muttered. "That is right into my hand, and I would be glad to know a little more about it than I now know. It is no wonder the young lady looked at me so strangely when I asked her about Wiley Simmes, as he is evidently related to the family. But why should she deny the relationship? The Ella Crozier whom Simmes married was probably a sister of this old gentleman, and the fair Kate is his niece. Is it possible that she is a daughter of Wiley Simmes? No, it can't be, as her name is Crozier. There is surely a mystery about the matter, and I mean to get at the heart of it if I can."

Unable to find anything more, in the Bible or elsewhere, that could throw light upon the subject of his wonderment, he went to bed, where he turned the matter over in his mind until sleep set him to dreaming of it.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE HEART OF THE HILLS.

A NIGHT scene in the heart of the Lampasas Hills.

At the head of a pass is a wild and romantic valley, with plenty of timber and water, and with grass where it has not been eaten off by the animals. The valley is shut in on all sides by ridges and cliffs, which render it nearly if not quite inaccessible, except by way of the pass.

Several skin lodges, in the Comanche style, are scattered about among the trees, and a few rude log cabins are built against the base of a cliff. It is evidently a permanent camp. As such, it can hardly be suspected of being the residence of any of the wild tribes of Texas, as it is not their custom to have permanent abiding places.

And yet the indications are very strong that it is an Indian encampment. A number of men, in the garb of Indians, and bearing unmistakably the appearance of aborigines, are standing and lounging about, or engaged in various light employments.

Among them, however, are nearly an equal number of others, who also wear the savage garb, and might easily be mistaken for Indians, did not a close inspection show that the bronze skins of most of them were originally white, and that they belonged to another race or more than one race, of men.

The camp is the rendezvous and retreat of a band of white and red Indians—outlaws both—who have become known and feared far and wide, under the leadership of Left Hand, a Kiowa sub-chief, and Glade Oak, who is more than suspected of being a white man.

Glade Oak and Left Hand are seated under a tree, near a lodge, conversing, and several other white and red men are near them, apparently paying little attention to the conversation, but in reality drinking in every word, and its tone is not altogether amicable.

Left Hand has been complaining to the white chief concerning the joint operations of the red and white members of the band, and of the comparatively small share of plunder, in his opinion, that has fallen to the red-men. He also complains that expeditions have been undertaken and raids have been conducted with a view to

serve the interests of Glade Oak and his friends, rather than those of Left Hand and his people. He is evidently dissatisfied with the management of their predatory partnership, and speaks sharply as well as querulously.

Left Hand is a tall, dark-featured Indian, with a morose countenance, and a hungry, vulture-like expression. Glade Oak is also dark-featured, for a white man, and his hair is quite gray. He bears his years well, however, and his large form, straight and full-chested, shows that he still possesses an abundance of strength and endurance.

"Well, chief," said the white man, "I must admit that you make a fair showing with your complaints, when you bunch them all together; but they don't really amount to much when we come to pull them apart and take them singly. However, I want to please you and your people, if I can, and mean to try to satisfy you. As for the cattle, I know that we haven't got as much for them lately as we expected to get; but there have been many difficulties in the way. We have not only had to take risks, ourselves, but have had to pay other people for taking risks; so that the loss and the cost have been considerable. We can't spare men to run the cattle into Mexico, and that has got to be too risky a business anyhow; so we must do the best we can."

"If we get little for the cattle," replied the chief, "we must take more cattle, and get more."

"That is another of your complaints. You think that we ought to make more raids and bring back more cattle; though I am afraid that you are more hungry for scalps than for cattle; and that is a business which pays less than anything. These Texans can stand it to lose a few cattle and horses now and then, but, when it comes to killing their wives and children, we may get the whole country raised, and the last man of us will have to go under."

"Is Glade Oak afraid?"

"You know whether I am afraid, and it isn't becoming to you, chief, to throw out any such slurs. If you must have a raid, you shall have it, and plenty of cattle. If it should bring us into trouble, you mustn't blame me. There is a fine herd fattening for us, down on the plains; but it belongs to a man named Jack Scott, who is a captain of rangers. Nothing would suit me better than to pitch into one of that crowd, and I hope that you will be as well suited. What do you think of it, Peters?"

That is into my hand," replied a white man, who had been sitting near, seeming to take no interest in the conversation. "I owe Jack Scott a grudge, and will be glad of the chance to take it out of him. But we may stir up a hornets' nest, and that's a fact."

There was a shrill whistle at the head of the pass, which attracted the attention of all, and soon two men rode into the valley—one of them a white man, mounted on a good horse, and the other an Indian, riding a pony. As they came forward and dismounted, Glade Oak recognized them, and hastened to meet them. He seized the hand of the white man, and wrung it until his visitor winced with pain.

"I am so glad to see you, Lee!" he exclaimed.

"It was so good of you to come as soon as I sent for you! But you will never regret it, my boy. You shall lose nothing by it."

"I hope I haven't lost anything by it," replied Lee Crozier; "but I am not sure. I know that I disliked to come, just at the time I was called upon."

"Why so?"

"Because of Cousin Kate and a stranger. I didn't like to leave them just then."

"What do you mean? Come and tell me all about it."

The two walked aside, and Lee Clozier gave Glade Oak a full and circumstantial account of the arrival of the young stranger at Redwood, of the difficulty that ensued, of the timely appearance of Kate Crozier, and of the race that wound up the affair."

"Well," said the white chief, when he had finished his account; "I don't see any occasion for uneasiness. The man was a perfect stranger, and it is not likely that Kate would take him home, although she asked you to invite him."

"Don't you know Kate better than that, uncle? You know how impulsive she is, and how willful she is, too. She is bound to have her own way in spite of everybody, and I could see that she had taken one of her sudden fancies to the stranger, or to his horse, perhaps to both. I would be willing to bet that he is at my father's house now. But that was not all. I was suspicious of that man, as I am naturally suspicious of every stranger who comes from that direction and in his style. I wanted to find out who and what he was. I would have taken him home, and would have wormed his secret out of him, if he had a secret; but Kate—she would be more likely to tell everything she knew, than to find out anything worth learning."

"What sort of a man was this stranger, as to looks?"

"Young—a little older than I am—fair-skinned—light-haired—blue-eyed—with sense and courage and activity and determination written all over him—a real splendid fellow to look at, I must admit."

"There are plenty of young men of that description. Can it be, think you, that there was another of them to come; that he has come at last?"

"It might be, and my suspicions are always running in that direction. If there should come another, Uncle Wiley, you know the old saying, that the third time is the charm."

"I would run no risks, my boy. Suspicion would be enough for me. If I should have cause to suspect that he has come on that errand, I would crush him at once. But I should hate to have any innocent blood on my hands, and it can hardly be possible that another was to come."

"I hope not. Whoever he may be, it won't be safe for him to get between Kate and me."

"Do you still wish to marry her?"

"Of course I do."

"It is well that you do. No matter how I came by my property, and no matter how I may leave it, there will be a pile at my death, and she is to have it. With the property you are to inherit, there will be a splendid fortune for you two, and it must be united in you. In that there

must be no failure. What seem to be her feelings toward you at present?"

"She likes me well enough, I suppose as a cousin. When that is said, all is said."

"Captain Crozier has too little energy. He does not take the interest in the match that he ought to take, that he *must* take. That shall be changed, and all concerned shall know just where they stand. She shall be given to know that she is to be your wife, and the affair must be settled before long. Yes, it must be settled and made certain, beyond the reach of chance or change. I am afraid that I am to have trouble here my boy. Left Hand and his Kiowas are becoming suspicious almost rebellious. I am inclined to think that they have been guessing at some secrets which I would rather they should know nothing about, and that they will be for taking the reins into their own hands. If they try it, there will be a fight, and one side or the other must be rubbed out. And again—though I don't like to confess it, and perhaps am silly and superstitious—I feel that I am not long for this world, that trouble is ahead of me, and that it is likely to make an end of me. I want you and Kate—"

The sentence was interrupted by a horrid yell, like the howl of a wild beast, but strangely suggestive of a human voice, proceeding from one of the ledges that surrounded the valley. Then something was heard crashing among the bushes and loosening the stones along the ledge, and the howl was repeated, echoed and re-echoed from rock to rock, until it died away in the distance.

The white chief sprung to his feet, his countenance expressive of surprise and terror. Lee Crozier also arose, his eyes wide open with wonder, listening intently for a repetition of that horrid, unearthly yell.

"What is it?" he asked, as some men came running by, making their way toward the ledge.

"The White Wolf!" was the reply. "He has got loose!"

"I told you," said Glade Oak, "that trouble was to come upon me. This is the beginning of it."

He hastened to a ledge, seized a rifle, and ran toward the ledge, closely followed by Lee Crozier. A number of white and red Indians were already on the ledge, in pursuit of the creature who had uttered the terrific howls.

Crozier caught sight of him, in the moonlight, as he crossed a bare part of the ledge. The creature had the form of a man, although his face could not be seen, was scantily clad in skins, and the remnants of a broken chain clanked among the rocks as he ran. His speed was so great, that he easily kept ahead of his pursuers, and he seemed to be impervious to their bullets, although shot after shot was fired after him."

At last his pursuers uttered a shout of triumph, as he halted at the edge of a precipice, which, as they well knew, was so steep that no man would dare attempt to descend it.

"Shoot him down! Shoot him down!" cried the white chief, as he fired his own rifle at the fugitive.

The creature uttered another howl, louder, wilder, more horrid than ever, and leaped out into the air,

CHAPTER V. OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

LAST CHANCE was in no hurry to tear himself away from Captain Crozier's mansion. There was a mystery about the place which he desired to solve, and there was an attraction, in the shape of Kate Crozier, from which he did not wish to free himself.

He made little progress in solving the mystery, but considerable progress in increasing the strength of the attraction. He and Kate Crozier became mutually more and more pleased with each other, and she seemed to have given herself up, without regard to mysteries and anxieties, freely and unreservedly to the enjoyment of his society.

A ride which he took, in the sole company of himself, on the evening of his second day's sojourn at the Crozier mansion, developed some new ideas, and added a fresh interest to the situation.

He had gone several miles from the plantation, in the direction of the distant hills, and was thinking about starting on his return, when he met another solitary horseman, who was riding toward him.

This horseman was still a young man, perhaps a dozen years older than Chance, although his hair, which was quite white, gave him a singular appearance of advanced age. His attire was that of the border, with a touch of the savage showing itself in buckskin moccasins and heavily fringed hunting-shirt. A rifle was slung at his back, and he carried a heavy stock whip in his hand.

As they approached each other, Last Chance recognized the other horseman, and spurred forward to meet him. A surprised and joyful greeting ensued.

"Jack Scott!" exclaimed Chance; "how in creation did you get down into this part of the country?"

"Is that you, Arthur Lynn? You are the last man I would have expected to meet here."

"I am glad to see you, old fellow. Tell me what it is that you are doing in Texas."

"Just now I have been hunting some stray cattle, but haven't found them, and am on my way home."

"On your way home! Do you mean to say that you have a *home* in this region?"

"That is just what I have, and it is a sure enough home. I have not only a home, but a wife, and a baby, and a big plantation, and so many cattle that I have lost the count of them."

"I am glad to hear that. How did it happen?"

"I came down here, soon after you left me, when we returned from our trip to the mountains. I don't know why I came, unless it was because I thought I belonged in Texas; but this was just the place for me, as it turned out. Indians were pretty bad just then, and I made myself so useful to the people about here, that they chose me a captain of rangers to look after the Indians and some others who needed taking care of. I had a rough time in that service, but it was the sort of a life that I liked, as you know, and I did my duty and became popular."

"Among other people I became intimate with an old gentleman who owned lots of land and

cattle, and who had only one child, and she was a daughter. The daughter took a fancy to me, and I to her, and we concluded to marry. Her father was willing, and we did marry. Then the old man died, and left us the plantation and cattle that I told you about. They belong to Tennessee—that's my wife—but she let's me boss them, and she is the best girl in the world, and I am as happy as any fellow needs to be."

"I congratulate you, Jack, with all my heart, and am free to say that such good luck could not happen to a man who is more worthy of it."

"Anyhow, Arthur, it is much easier to imagine why I should have come to this country, than why I should find you here. I want to know what has brought you to Texas?"

"It is a long story, Jack, and a hard one; but I will give it to you in as few words as possible. Many years ago, shortly before I was born, my father was a prominent lawyer in Kentucky, and prosecuting attorney of a judicial district. In one of the counties which composed the district lived a family named Simmes, the male members of which were a man and his two sons. They were all most desperate and outrageous law-breakers, and were the terror of the country.

"My father determined that those outlaws should be brought to justice, and stirred up the people until he gathered a posse for the purpose. He put himself at the head of the posse, and accomplished the object, after a desperate struggle, in which the old man and one of the sons were killed. The other two sons were captured, were placed in the safest jail in the district, and were securely guarded until the day of trial, when they were found guilty of murder, and sentenced to be hung. The sentence was executed upon one of them; but the other, whose name was Wiley Simmes, escaped from the jail and fled the country. The people showed their appreciation of my father's efforts in breaking up the gang, by electing him judge of that circuit.

"One night, a few weeks after I came into the world, he was seated in his house, with his family around him, when the crack of a rifle was heard, and he fell dead, shot through the brain. It was soon learned that Wiley Simmes had returned from Texas, and had been seen in the neighborhood. As he disappeared immediately after my father's death, there was the strongest reason to suspect that he had committed the murder, that he had come from Texas for that special purpose.

"My eldest brother, Reuben, was then nearly a man grown. As soon as he was of age, he left us, and started for Texas, with the avowed intention of finding Wiley Simmes and avenging his father's death. We never heard of him again, and the presumption is that he failed to shear the wolf and met his death in the attempt. My mother had been broken down in health by my father's death; the loss of Reuben filled the measure of her afflictions, and she died.

"Then my brother Frank set out on the same errand that had made an end of Reuben. I wanted to go with him; but he would not allow me to do so, saying that I was too young.

It was a long time before I heard from him, then I received a letter, telling me that he had heard of Wiley Simmes, and was seeking him.

"There was another long silence; then another letter, saying that he had found Simmes, and was on his trail. The letter was written from somewhere in this vicinity. That was about five years ago, and I have never again heard from Frank. He, also, failed to shear the wolf.

"I am the last of the family, and have devoted myself to the same mission of vengeance. I was held back, during several years, by circumstances which were beyond my control, but have come at last. I have not only the death of my father to avenge, but the fate of my two brothers—whatever that may have been, and must make a sure thing of it."

"It is no easy task, Arthur," said Jack Scott.

"You mustn't call me Arthur, Jack, or Lynn. Last Chance is the name I am to be known by here, and that of Arthur Lynn must not be heard of."

"It is a strange name, my boy."

"Yes, and it is a strange purpose that has caused me to take it. In that purpose I am set, and mean to leave nothing undone that should be done, toward carrying it into effect."

"You may rely on me, my boy, to do everything that I can do to help you."

"I can't allow myself to call upon you, Jack. I must play a lone hand in this game. You have a wife and a child. For their sakes you must not run any unnecessary risks. But you may be able to give me some information."

"About Wiley Simmes? I don't know any man of that name."

"Well, I have a clew. I believe that he is alive, and that he is somewhere in this neighborhood. It was at Captain Crozier's that I found the clew."

"You have been at Captain Crozier's? And only two days in the country? That is pretty well. How did it happen, Arthur?"

"Call me Chance, Jack; anything but Arthur or Lynn. It happened that I was taken to Captain Crozier's by his niece, a young lady named Kate Crozier."

"You have seen Kate Crozier, and she has taken you to her father's house? That beats me. Well, Chancy, you may as well give up your game!"

"Why so?"

"Because you will be sure to fall in love with that girl, if you haven't done so already, and then you will have neither the time nor the heart for following up that other business."

"That's as it may be. It is certain that nothing shall hinder me from pursuing my purpose. I asked the young lady about Wiley Simmes, and she acted very strangely. She begged me not to have anything to do with him, and admitted that he had a bad reputation, though she hoped—quite warmly—that he didn't deserve it. Then I caught sight of the record of a marriage, in a Bible at the house, which leads me to believe that Wiley Simmes married a sister of Captain Crozier's. Consequently, he may be Miss Kate's uncle, and that would account for her strange conduct when I mentioned his name."

"Or her father, Chancy."

The young man started and turned pale.

"No, Jack!" he exclaimed. "How can you say that? Her name is Crozier, not Simmes. It is impossible that she should be his daughter. The same suspicion occurred to me for a moment, but I thrust it aside immediately. Of course he can't be her father."

"I hope not," replied Jack, with some feeling. "I now think that I know who Wiley Simmes is, and that I could put my hand on him without much difficulty. I am sure that I know the haunts of that girl's uncle, or whoever he may be. I ought to know something about this country, Chancy, as it was here that I began life."

"Were you born here, Jack? That is news to me."

"I didn't say that I was born here."

"What do you mean, then?"

"I will tell you, if you want to know. It isn't much of a story, though it is a strange one."

CHAPTER VI.

ADVENTURE AND DISCOVERY.

"I DIDN'T tell you that I was born here," said Jack Scott, by way of commencing his story. "I said that it was here that I began life, and I began it here as a grown man. I don't know where or when I was born, nor do I know anything of the life I led before I began my life here. I only know that I was picked up by a Lipan Indian, one morning, at the foot of a cliff not far from here, and that I was as near dead as a man could be and miss it. I suppose it would hardly be stretching the truth to say that I was shot all to pieces. I have a number of scars on my body, and the worst, I think, is on the side of my head, where a bullet grazed my skull, and I suppose it cracked it. The shock must have destroyed my memory, as I have not the least idea how I came by my hurts, nor the slightest remembrance of anything that had happened to me previous to that time."

"The Lipans took compassion on me, and nursed me back to life. They were a long time about it, no doubt, and their skill in the treatment of wounds must have been great. They all wondered how I lived through it, and I have never ceased to wonder at that, myself. But I did live, as you see, and grew well and strong at last, though my hair was as white as it now is, before I could stand on my feet."

"As it was impossible to recall the past, I bothered myself no more about it than I could help, and became reconciled to my new life. I got the name of Jack Scott—though I don't know how I got it, and don't suppose it belongs to me—and made myself useful to the Lipans. Once I accompanied them on a hunting-exursion, to the north of the Arkansas, and fell in with some white hunters, who persuaded me to take a trip to the mountains. It was there that I met you. Since my return to Texas, the Lipans have been my good friends, and allies. They have rendered me some service, and I have done them many favors. Now you know, Chancy, why I say that my life began here. But what is the matter with your horse, my boy? Did a snake cross the road?"

"No. Your horse is frightened, too. There must be something in the brush yonder."

Both horses had stopped, and were snorting, backing, trembling, and giving evidence of extreme terror. Their riders spoke to them, but could not quiet them. As Last Chance had said, there was surely something in the brush ahead of them.

"Some sort of a varmint," said Scott. "I see his eyes shine."

The other looked in the direction pointed out, and he, too saw a pair of glaring, fiery eyeballs gleaming through the foliage, which hid the face to which they belonged.

Scott unslung his rifle, and his companion drew a pistol from his belt.

The horses snorted in their increased terror, and backed and plunged, as a rustling was heard in the brush, and a strange creature burst out and stood before them.

At the first view, the creature might easily have been mistaken for a wild beast; but it walked on two legs, and wore the semblance of a man. His long and tangled hair fell in masses about his shoulders and over his wild and fiery eyes. His face was covered with an abundance of rough and matted beard, which scarcely permitted the countenance to be seen. He was bareheaded, but was scantily clothed in ragged skins, which seemed to have been tied about him with strings. In one hand he carried a long and stout stick, and the fragment of a chain was fastened to one ankle.

"Who—what is this?" asked Arthur Lynn, as he cocked his pistol, and leveled it at the advancing creature.

"Don't shoot," replied Scott, "It must be a wild-man, though I have never heard of such a thing in these parts. He don't mean any harm, I hope, and we mustn't hurt him."

The creature stopped in front of the horses, which were only partially controlled by the strong arms of their riders. He shaded his eyes with his hand, and looked at them long and searchingly. Then he spoke, in harsh, metallic, unpleasant tones, which set his bearers' nerves on edge, as the filing of a saw might have done.

"Wiley Simmes!" he said. "Wiley Simmes! No! Not here! But I will find him! Yah-ha! ha! ha-a-a!"

His voice continued to rise as he spoke, and he ended with a demonish yell, which was prolonged as he ran away, with long and rapid strides, and disappeared in the broken and thickly-timbered ground at the left of the track.

The two horsemen restored their weapons to their places, and looked wonderingly at each other.

"Theatrical!" said Arthur Lynn.

"It beats me," said Scott. "Whoever or whatever the thing is, he is as wild as a panther, and is raving crazy. Where can he have come from?"

"He was looking for Wiley Simmes. Didn't you hear him? and didn't you notice the chain on his leg, and the blood on his legs and arms and head? He is some poor devil whom that wretch has had a spite against, and whom he has tortured until he has made a beast of him. He has been chained but has got loose, and only knows enough to hunt the man who has abused him."

"That may be so, I am afraid you are right,

If I could catch the creature, and if he had sense enough to tell what is the matter with him, I would know more about it."

"There is danger in allowing such an object to wander about the country."

"True enough; and that makes me think of my wife and baby. It is getting late, Chancy, and you had better go home and pass the night with me, and let me show you Ten and Eleven."

"What do you mean by Ten and Eleven?"

"Ten, is my wife, Tennessee. As the boy is one more, I sometimes call him Eleven. Ten has heard me speak of you, and will be glad to see you."

"But I ought to go back to Captain Crozier's. They will be expecting me there."

"You are a long way from Crozier's. You couldn't reach his house until late at night, and they will not be expecting you then. My place is only a mile or so from here, and it will really be better for you to take shelter with me."

"I believe you are right, and I will accept your offer."

As the sun was getting low, the two riders pushed their horses, and went forward at a brisk pace, until they came in sight of a broad and low farm-house, with straggling outbuildings about it, situated in a depression of the prairie, that might almost be called a valley.

The setting sun gave such pleasant tints to the brown homestead and the green fields, and the scene was so quiet and peaceful, that Arthur Lynn involuntarily paused to admire it.

Almost too quiet and peaceful, Jack Scott seemed to think, as he reined in his horse, and bent a searching glance upon the scene before him, while his face was shadowed by an expression of anxiety and dread.

"I don't like the look of this, Chancy," he said, seizing the arm of his friend with a convulsive grip.

"What do you mean? It looks pleasant enough, I am sure. What is the matter?"

"Nothing, I hope; but I am afraid. It is too still—strangely still. I hear nothing, and see nothing that moves. No cattle, no niggers, no noise. There may have been a raid. I have enemies enough. If anything has gone wrong with Tennie and the baby, I don't know how I shall stand it."

They rode on; but the shadow deepened on Captain Scott's face as he approached his home, and still heard no noise, and still saw nothing move. He fairly trembled at the anticipation of what he feared, and his companion felt that he could say nothing to relieve his anxiety.

As they neared the house, a negro boy came in sight, crawling out from under a wood-pile and running toward them. He was crying and wringing his hands, and his black face was blue with grief and terror.

"Dey's done gone, Marse Jack! Dey's done gone!" he was saying, as he ran up to his master.

"What is the matter, Tony?"

"Injuns, Marse Jack! Injuns!"

"What has happened? Tell me all about it?"

From the boy's distracted statements it was gathered that "a big crowd of Injuns had come, had killed de niggers, had run off de cattle, had gone troo de house, and had carried away Miss Tennie and de baby."

Captain Scott turned deadly pale. He reeled in his saddle, and would have fallen if his friend had not held him. When he recovered his composure, he dismounted.

"Hitch these horses, Tony," he said. "Come, Chancy let us walk in and see for ourselves."

The two white men entered the yard and the house. They found two negro men and a woman, dead and scalped. In the house, such articles as and not been carried away were broken up, thrown about, and left in the greatest confusion. It was a dead-house to Jack Scott. Its life, its soul, its heart, had been violently wrenched away, and only the shell was left. He said nothing, but went on into the room which had once been his wives, and where there was still much to remind him of her. There he turned his face to the wall, and covered it with his hands. After a few moments he walked out, followed by his friend.

"Now for business," he said. "I will soon know who has done this, and they shall have cause to wish that they had killed Jack Scott before they touched his family."

He closely questioned the negro boy, and learned that the marauders had come before noon, that part of the negroes had escaped to the timber, and that Tony had concealed himself in the wood-pile, from which he did not dare to emerge until he saw his master approach.

Then the ranger closely studied, as well as the growing dusk would allow, all the tracks about the place, both of horses and men.

"It is just as I suspected," he said. "Glade Oak and Left Hand have been here, with their red and white robbers. Sam Peters with them. He owes me a special grudge, and has struck a hard blow this time. Chancy, I am with you, now, in a hunt for Wiley Simmes."

"What shall we do first?" asked Chancy.

"We must follow that trail. There will be a moon, and we can do it easy enough. Do you stay here, Tony, until some of the people come back. Then tell them to bury these bodies and fix up things as well as they can."

CHAPTER VII.

WHITE WOLF.

POOR Tennessee Scott! It was wonderful how bravely she bore herself, when her plantation was harried, when her servants were murdered, and when she was dragged from her home, with her babe in her arms.

The worst of her trials came when she was approached by a man who appeared to be an Indian, but who spoke to her, tauntingly and triumphantly, in her own language. She then knew him to be Sam Peters, a man whom her husband, as a captain of rangers, had once doomed to death for his many crimes, but who had escaped the noose that was knotted for him, and had vowed to be revenged upon Captain Scott. This wretch quickly gave her to understand that she was in his power, and that he would visit upon her the vengeance which he was unable to wreak upon her husband.

Even then she bore herself proudly, and her black eyes flashed defiance at the painted villains, as she rejoiced in the reflection that her husband had been from home, that he had not fallen

under their murderous hands, that he still lived for pursuit and for vengeance, if not for rescue. It was for him she feared, in him her life was bound up, and she knew that he was safe. She knew that the hardy borderers would rally to his call, and that a fearful retribution would overtake those who had dared to outrage his homestead.

She well knew that resistance and remonstrance were alike useless, and that she could only passively submit to whatever she should be compelled to do.

She mounted a horse, therefore, as she was ordered to do, with her babe in her arms, and rode away toward the north, with the main body of the marauders. A smaller portion set off in another direction, driving the cattle and horses that had been collected from the plantation.

Night found her in the heart of the hills, at the camp of the red and white outlaws, and there was a discussion among them as to what should be done with her. As it was carried out in a language that was unknown to her, she could only guess at its meaning. Sam Peters seemed to urge his claim vehemently, but was hotly opposed by the Left Hand, who had designs of his own upon the captive.

The discussion was closed by placing the prisoner in charge of Glade Oak, who was to have temporary control of her until the rival claims should be adjusted. He led her up a steep and difficult way, to a ledge in the side of the cliff, where he told her that she might remain unmolested until morning. He then left her, and placed two of his men as guards at the foot of the way that led up the ledge.

Tennie looked about her when he had gone, and carefully studied the situation. The ledge was narrow, being little more than a small opening in the cliff, overhung by masses of rock. There was manifestly no way of egress, except by the road by which she had come. As escape was impossible, the had nothing to do but to reconcile herself to the fact that she must remain there until morning, when her fate would be decided.

The hours of the right slipped away rapidly, until it was near time for the shades to begin to lift. The moon had set, and the camp of the outlaws was shrouded in darkness. They were all asleep, with the exception of the guards at the head of the pass and the sentries about the camp. On the hard ledge lay Tennie Scott, sleeping an uneasy sleep, with her baby hugged close to her heart.

Suddenly a form approached and stood over her—the form of a strange, wild-looking creature, scantily clothed in skins, and wearing the fragment of a chain at one of his ankles. He seemed to have come out of the solid rock in front of which Tennie lay; but daylight would have revealed the fact that he had rolled away a large stone, disclosing an opening through which he had crawled.

He bent over the sleeping mother and her babe, and examined them closely for a few moments, with the look of one who was accustomed to darkness, and who could see at night, as well as by day.

Then he stooped lower, and wrapped the

blanket closely about the mother's head and arms. Almost by the same motion he seized Tennie and lifted her, holding her so that it was impossible for her to move.

He stepped to the edge of the cliff and uttered a fearful, demonish yell—a mingling of the howl of a wild beast with the shriek of a bird of prey—which cut the darkness of the valley, arousing its echoes, and startling from their slumbers the sleeping scoundrels below.

“The White Wolf!” they shouted, as they recognized the horrid yell, and caught sight of that tall form.

The two guards who had been left at the foot of the steep ascent began to climb the rocks, and half a dozen rifles cracked, aimed at the White Wolf.

But he was out of the reach of bullets, and was already crawling, with his burden, through the opening by which he had come. He paused a moment, to replace the stone which he had rolled away, and resumed his course, coming out into the open air at a place where frightful ravines and rugged masses of rock seemed to oppose an impassable barrier to further progress. But neither of these obstacles, nor the thick darkness, nor the weight he carried, seemed to impede the movements of the wild mountaineer, who descended into the ravines, and sprung from rock to rock, as sure-footed and almost as swift as the mountain goat.

The burden in his arms had been aroused from her slumber when he took her up. Her first impulse had been to scream, and her next had been to attempt to escape. Neither of these impulses had been productive of any result. Her voice was so effectually smothered that she could not even move in the grasp of those long and powerful arms.

She shuddered when the White Wolf uttered that demonish howl, and was sufficiently alive to her situation to wonder what had happened to her and what would become of her baby. Then her senses forsook her, and she was borne on unresisting.

It was daylight when she awoke, and she was lying on a couch of cedar boughs on a ledge similar to that from which she had been taken. This ledge differed from the other, however, in being backed by a roomy cave, and there appeared to be no possible approach to it from below.

Even before she was fairly awake, she instinctively felt for her child, and found it at her side. She touched it, shook it, until a faint cry told that it was alive.

Satisfied on this point, she looked about to examine her surroundings.

At once her eye fell upon the horrid form of the creature who had brought her there. He was seated near her, with his knees drawn up, and his mouth spread in what was doubtless intended for a smile; but it only increased his ugliness. Still, there was something of a kindly light in his wild eyes, and his intentions did not appear to be immediately hostile.

Tennie could not repress a cry of terror and dismay. Was it a wild animal or a madman that had her in his power. Almost any fate seemed to her, at that moment, to be preferable to this.

"Merciful God!" she muttered. "Am I awake, or is this a hideous dream?"

The monster spread his mouth wider yet, and patted his hands upon his knees in a conciliatory manner.

"Don't be afraid," he said. "I am mad, and I know it; but I won't harm *you*. I am crazy when I see Wiley Simmes and his vultures; but I know that you will be good to me, and I will be good to you."

"Who are you? What are you?" gasped Tennie.

"I was Wiley Simmes's White Wolf," replied the creature, mumbling his words, as if unaccustomed to the use of his vocal organs. "I was his pet White Wolf, and he chained me and tortured me; but I am free now, and he shall never chain me again. I will find him, and will make my teeth meet in his throat, and will give his flesh to the buzzards."

The creature gnashed his teeth and foamed at his mouth, until Tennie shuddered and feared to look at him. But the tugging of her baby at the breast mercifully drew her thoughts into another channel.

"I will starve here," she muttered, "and baby will die."

White Wolf ran to the end of the cave, and brought to her an Indian basket, which he placed at her side. It was full of cooked meat and corn-cakes, all cold, but fresh and savory.

This evidence of his kindness and good intentions emboldened her to speak to him.

"Where did this come from?" she asked, looking at him in wonder.

"Eat it. It is good, and will give you life and strength. I stole it from Wiley Simmes and his vultures. And this is not all I mean to steal from him. I am crazy, but am wise enough in some things, and I mean to steal his heart's blood. But I will be good to you and your little tender lamb. Eat, and I will bring you water."

Tennie ate until she was satisfied, and drank water from a tin cup which White Wolf gave her. Then she thanked him for what he had brought.

"Can you get more when this is gone?" she asked.

"Plenty. I can steal all the meat and bread they have. I stole *you* from them, when they meant to kill you, or to chain you up and torture you. Soon I will steal Wiley Simmes's heart. I wear his chain, so that I may remember him, but it hurts me to carry it. See!"

Tennie looked at his ankle, and saw that it was raw and bleeding where the iron had chafed it. She even felt of the chain, and examined it closely, only to discover that it could not be removed without tools. Then an idea struck her, and she hastened to cut strips from a blanket, with a scissors which she carried in her pocket. She washed the wounds, bound them up with a piece of her dress, and then wound the strips of blanket about the chain, swathing and confining it, so that it could not chafe his flesh or impede his motion as it had previously done. White Wolf looked his gratitude, and tears fell from his eyes. Tennie then knew that he was human, and that his heart was right, no matter how his head might have been abused.

CHAPTER VIII.

WILEY SIMMES HAS HIS TROUBLES.

GLADE OAK had taken no part in the discussion between Left Hand and Sam Peters concerning their claims to the possession of Tennessee Scott. The white chief surely had as much right to the fair captive as either of the others; but he asserted no claim, and seemed to be preoccupied by other thoughts. He had taken charge of her, when she was left to him, and had cared for her as well as he could. Then he laid down to sleep with the others; but it was a long time before his eyes were closed in slumber.

He was the first to be awoken by the demonish yell that startled the whole camp, and the first to utter the cry of White Wolf that followed it.

Looking up with the others, he saw the tall form of the wild man, dimly against the cliff, snatched up his rifle, and sent a ball whizzing at the creature whose yell had aroused him.

"It's no use," he muttered, as he perceived that White Wolf had not been harmed by the shots. "Powder and lead won't touch him."

Then he sat down, to await the approach of the men who had hastened to ascend the cliff.

They came back after awhile, and brought a strange account. They had seen nothing, heard nothing, found nothing. White Wolf was not on the ledge, and the woman and her child had disappeared. The guards at the foot of the cliff were questioned, and were ready to swear that nobody had passed them. The others were sure that there was no chance to reach the ledge or to leave it, except by the steep and difficult way up which Tennie Scott had been taken. The affair was shrouded in mystery, and none of them could make any thing of it.

"White Wolf is dead," said Glade Oak. "He killed himself when he jumped from the cliff yonder, and it is his ghost that has appeared to us and carried off the woman."

Sam Peters muttered something about a game having been played upon him.

"Do you mean to say that I have played a game upon you?" exclaimed Glade Oak, as he turned sharply and faced him. "If you dare to insinuate such a lie, I will make buzzard's meat of you in no time."

Peters said nothing more, and the white chief walked away, sullen, morose, and bent with anxiety.

In the course of the morning he announced his intention of going to attend to the disposal of the cattle that had been procured on the raid, and prepared himself for that purpose. Washing the paint from his face and trimming his hair altered his aspect considerably. When he had arrayed himself in a homespun coat, jeans breeches and a plaid vest, he presented the appearance of an honest farmer on a peaceful errand, and could not easily be recognized as Glade Oak, the outlaw chief who was feared and hated through all that portion of Texas. It is true that he carried a rifle, but that was nothing unusual, and his two revolvers were concealed under the skirts of his ample coat.

In this guise he reached Captain Crozier's plantation, and was recognized by Lee Crozier, who at once ushered him into a private room, where his father was seated.

Captain Crozier turned pale and trembled at

the sight of his visitor. His timidity and confusion were so great, that he did not rise to greet him, but remained in his chair, downcast and ill at ease.

The white chief did not allow this lack of courtesy to bother him, but helped himself to a chair, and motioned to Lee to withdraw.

"What's the matter with you, Crozier?" he asked, roughly and sneeringly. "You look as sneaking as a suck-egg dog, or as mean as a nigger who has been caught stealing chickens. I hope you are not afraid of me."

"You know well enough, Wiley, that I have reason to dread your coming," replied Captain Crozier. "I never see you but you want me to aid you in some of your lawless operations, or to do something that may put my neck in a noose."

"Bah! You are terribly afraid of that precious neck of yours. I can't see that it is in any danger, except from your own folly and cowardice. You know what I have been doing, not only since you have been acquainted with me, but all my life, and I am not dead yet."

"No; you are alive; but what a life it is! I would not lead such a life as you lead for the world."

"What silly talk that is, Crozier! You ought to be ashamed of it. Better live such a life as mine, and get some profit out of it, than keep up such a miserable, sneaking existence as yours, with so little to show for what you do."

"It is true that I have nothing to show for my life, that I am in a tangle from which I can't extricate myself, that you have made me your tool and your slave; but I have done nothing for which the law could hold me accountable; while you—the people in these parts would never wait for the law if they should lay their hands on you."

"They shall never lay their hands on me, unless they touch my dead body. Living men can't frighten me; but when the dead come after me, that gives me the blues."

"What do you mean by that, Wiley?"

"Never mind; there was something; but I won't speak of it now. I have come on business, and that must be attended to before anything else. We have just run off a big drove of cattle and horses. Perhaps you have heard of it."

Captain Crozier groaned.

"You needn't be scared. They were not your cattle, and the transaction is not going to hurt you. My men have hurried them off to Nunez, who will lose no time in running them into Mexico. You will soon receive a draft from Nunez, drawn on some Mexican banker, and I want you to get it cashed, and to keep the proceeds for me. Will you do it?"

"I suppose I must; but I do wish, for Kate's sake, that I could get out of this business, and that you would not trouble me any more."

Wiley Simmes laughed, and his laugh was one that made his brother-in-law shudder.

"For Kate's sake?" he asked. "Why not for Lee's sake?"

"For Lee's sake, too, of course, though he might take care of himself."

"I think he might, and no thanks to you. For Kate's sake, as well as for Lee's sake, you had better stick to me as long as you can."

Where would you have been, long ago, if you hadn't had me to stand by you? Down in the depths of bankruptcy, so deep that you would never have been heard of. A little worse than that you would have been, too, if I had not kept a still tongue in my head."

"I don't see that I am much better off as it is," muttered Crozier. "All that I have belongs to you, and I can't move a step without your permission."

"You are alive, and that is something, and that precious good name of yours, of which you are so tender, is saved to your family, of whom you are so proud. Of course I had to keep a hold upon you, and I don't mean to let it go just yet. But I won't have to call upon you to help me in my business again. When you have cashed that draft, I won't bother you in that line of business again."

"Thank God for that! I am afraid, Wiley, that this last raid of yours is the worst thing you could have done, for your own good, and that it will bring you into trouble. Those were Captain Scott's cattle that you took, and you know who and what he is. There was murder done, I hear, and scalping, and Scott's wife and child were carried away."

"I am not afraid of Captain Scott and all his rangers," replied the white chief. "If there was nothing but them to trouble me, I would be easy enough. But Left Hand and his Kiowas are getting ructious, and I will have a difficulty with them yet. It was to please them and Sam Peters that I made the raid on Scott's plantation. But that isn't all, Crozier. I have other reasons for believing that trouble is near me."

"What sort of trouble?"

"The White Wolf got loose the other night!" Captain Crozier seemed to be surprised, but not at all frightened, at this intelligence.

"What of that?" he asked. "He must be wild—perhaps an idiot, if not a madman. Why should you be afraid of him?"

"I am not afraid of any living man. He is dead. He jumped off a cliff while we were chasing him, and that killed him, no doubt."

"If he is dead, you are safe. What harm can happen to you from him?"

"When the dead come back, they can do damage which we can't guard against. His ghost came to the camp last night, and carried away Scott's wife and child."

"His ghost! You needn't accuse me of talking nonsense, Wiley. It was the man himself. He is alive, and you had better look after him."

"I tell you that no mortal man could have got where he went to, or could have disappeared as he did. It was his ghost, and that means mischief to me. I wish you would get me some whisky, Crozier. The thought of that business makes me sick."

While Captain Crozier was gone for some liquor, his brother-in-law paced the floor restlessly.

CHAPTER IX.

A PLOT AGAINST KATE.

THE white chief drank a heavy draught of the whisky that Crozier brought him.

"I hope it will drive away the blues," he said.

"I must confess that I have had a bad attack of them lately."

"I have had some cause for uneasiness, too," said Crozier. "There has been a young man here—"

"Yes," interrupted the other; "Lee has told me about him. The boy seemed to be unwilling to leave him with Kate when I sent for him. Is the young man here now?"

"I don't know what has become of him. He went to ride yesterday, and was to return; but he hasn't come back, and I can see that Kate is uneasy."

"Is Kate uneasy? Is that what makes you uneasy?"

"Not that alone. There is a look about him that I don't like—something that reminds me of Frank Lynn, as he looked when he stopped at my house."

"What is the fellow's name?"

"He calls himself Last Chance."

"Does he pretend to say that is his real name?"

"He sticks to it that it is."

"He lies. No white man on earth was ever baptized with such a ridiculous name. Can there be another who has come to seek me? Yes; there was a baby, and he must be a man grown now. If it is another of the Lynns, he had better not cross my path, as I will be sure to make an end of that hated race. But I am sick and tired of blood, Crozier. I am getting too old for that. Hand me the whisky."

The white chief poured down another strong draught of the fiery liquor.

"There is cause for uneasiness, Crozier, as you say," he resumed, "and it is no wonder that I have had the blues lately. There are several chances against me just now, and any one of them may make an end of me. It is because I feel that I may turn up missing some day, that I want to settle that marriage between Lee and Kate."

Captain Crozier shuddered and hung down his head.

"You are not going to kick against it, I hope," said Simmes.

"Oh, no; I am not going to make any objection, or to put any hindrance in the way of the marriage. I was thinking of what Kate's feelings might be."

"You needn't say a word about it. I know what they are, better than you could tell me. I know that she don't care for Lee, except as a cousin. Perhaps she may even dislike him. But that mustn't interfere with the business. Love will come along after marriage, and they will both bless us for having brought them together. I have a right to manage my child, I am sure, as I think best."

"Do you suppose that Lee will object to the match?" asked Captain Crozier, his face brightening as he looked up.

"Lee object to it? Not he. You needn't think that that will put a stop to it. He has set his heart on the girl, and means to have her, and I mean that he shall. It is Kate who must be made to listen to reason, and I know how to attend to her case."

"Do you mean to force the girl into a marriage?"

"I will tell you exactly what I do mean," answered Simmes, as he helped himself to a glass of whisky. "I mean that you shall have business away from this plantation, which will keep you absent for a day or two. While you are away I will come here in disguise, and will pick Kate up and carry her off. When I get her into the hills, I shall manage the business to suit myself; but you may be sure that they will be well married. You understand me now. To-morrow morning you are to leave. There is nothing more to be said about it. When the draft comes from Nunez, and when you have cashed it, you must remember that you are to keep the proceeds for me. That is all, and I am off."

Leaving Captain Crozier seated in his chair, with his head hung down, and his countenance expressive of intense inward pain, the white chief walked out of the room and out of the house.

As he was about to mount his horse, Kate Crozier came running to him, not with joyful alacrity, but with the air of one who has an unpleasant or difficult task to perform, and means to perform it.

Wiley Simmes looked surprised as he saw her, and chuckled her under the chin, not very affectionately, but with a pleasant smile.

"Why, my beauty, this is something like!" he said. "I can't remember when you have run to see me in this way. Are you glad to meet me, or glad to see me go?"

Kate jumped into the middle of her business at once, like one who has to take a cold bath, and who means to plunge in and be over with it.

"I want to ask you a question," she replied. "Have you seen a young gentleman, a stranger in these parts, named Last Chance?"

"Last Chance? Last Chance? Do you really mean to say that there is any person living who has the right to wear such a ridiculous name?"

"Will you please answer my question, sir? Have you seen any young gentleman who called himself by that name?"

"It is the same young fellow you brought home from Redwood, whose horse won a race there the other day?"

"Yes, sir. He said that his business in this country might require him to see you, and was asking where you were to be found. He went away from here yesterday, and has not returned. I thought you might have met him."

"I haven't met him, and perhaps it is as well for him that I shouldn't meet him. As for you, Katie, you had better not bother your brains about him or any other Last Chance or Lost Chances. Your fortune is made, and you can see all you ought to see right here at home. Mind that, my girl!"

The white chief mounted his horse and rode away without any further adieux. At a little distance he was joined by Lee Crozier, who went with him.

These two had been gone but a short time, traveling toward the north, when two more horsemen came in sight from the south, and Kate Crozier, who was sadly meditating upon the last words of Wiley Simmes, clapped her hands in glee as she recognized Last Chance. His companion was Captain Scott.

The young gentleman stopped at the gate;

but Scott went to the house and direct to Captain Crozier's room. His face was pale, his lips were compressed, and his whole appearance was expressive of stern determination.

Captain Crozier, who was in a stupor when this visitor entered his room, looked up in surprise, anxious to know what was meant by the set purpose in his face.

"I believe you know who and what I am," said the ranger, in reply to Captain Crozier's greeting. "My name is Jack Scott, and I have no time to waste in useless talk. My plantation has been robbed, my cattle have been run off, my house has been plundered, my negroes have been killed and scalped, and my wife and child have been carried away, by a band of thieving and murdering Indians and white men who are worse than Indians."

"I had heard of that; it is very sad," muttered Captain Crozier.

"The leader of that band is a white Indian, who is known among his red scalpers by the name of Glade Oak. His real name is Wiley Simmes, and he is your brother-in-law."

"This is very shocking," said Crozier, in great confusion. "It is true that I have a brother-in-law named Wiley Simmes; but it is hard to believe that he would be guilty of such a crime. Are you sure that you are justified in charging him with it?"

"I know that I am, and you know it, too. It is useless to mince matters or to pick words. You know that Wiley Simmes is a robber and a murderer. The people are aroused, and it is decreed that he shall die, and that his band shall be wiped out. I don't expect to see my wife and child again. If I should find her she will be dead or worse; but those who committed this outrage shall be fearfully punished. All the people will turn out, and every man who is not for us is against us. I have come to tell you this, so that you may know your place and keep it."

Captain Crozier trembled and writhed, while a livid hue overspread his countenance, and his eyes looked in every direction except at the man before him.

"Do you want me to turn out? I am an old man."

"We don't expect you to turn out," replied Scott. "As you say, you are an old man; but you have a son, and we shall count upon him. It will be well for him if he joins us soon. If he does not, he must expect to be treated as an enemy. As for you, Captain Crozier, you are more than suspected of having aided Glade Oak in his operations, and you had better be careful how you conduct yourself."

Captain Crozier arose, and drew himself up with considerable dignity.

"Do you know who you are speaking to, and whose house you are in?" he asked.

"I know it well, and I know that I am speaking the truth. It is necessary to speak plainly, and I mean to speak plainly. I say that you had better be careful how you conduct yourself. If you are again guilty of harboring Glade Oak or any of his men, you will be treated as an accomplice in this last crime, and will be strung up to the nearest tree. You know who I am, and that I am in the habit of making

my words good. That is all I have to say about it."

The ranger turned and walked away, leaving Captain Crozier a prey to conflicting feelings that nearly drove him frantic.

Last Chance, in the mean time, had been improving the shining moments with Kate Crozier, at the gate. She did not attempt to conceal her joy at seeing him, and asked him why he had stayed away. He told her that he had met Captain Scott, who was an old acquaintance and friend, and that the hours had slipped away so rapidly while they were conversing of old times, that he did not think of returning to the Crozier mansion until it was too late to do so. He had then accepted his friend's invitation to pass the night with him, and had accompanied him to his house. The young gentleman related what he had seen there, and brought tears to Kate Crozier's eyes when he described the agony of his friend.

"The leader of that band of savage wretches," he said, "is what is called a white Indian, and he turns out to be no other than that same Wiley Simmes, about whom I was asking you some questions."

Kate Crozier cast down her eyes, and trembled so that she was obliged to support herself against the fence.

"Captain Scott is in an awful state of mind," continued the young gentleman. "He is bent on revenge, and has called out the rangers. The people are aroused, and mean to make an end of Wiley Simmes and his gang."

"But you—what interest have you in the matter?" asked Kate, without looking up.

"I shall help my friend, of course."

"I wish I could say something to persuade you to keep out of that business. Why should you peril your life in an enterprise that is to bring you no benefit? I have already warned you against having any thing to do with Wiley Simmes."

"I don't believe that he can harm me. He is nothing to you, I hope."

"Nothing to me? Oh, no. Of course not. But—I do wish I could see you once again, before you go on that expedition."

Captain Scott came out of the house just then, and the remainder of the conversation between the two was limited to a few words; but it resulted in an agreement for a meeting the next day.

CHAPTER X.

LOVE RUNS ROUGHLY.

CAPTAIN JACK SCOTT'S rallying cry brought the rangers to the front rapidly. It was a long time since they had had any important work to do, and they had virtually disbanded; but they loved their leader, and came to his call with alacrity, ready and anxious for action.

The rendezvous of the outlaws was well known, and Jack Scott had tracked the raiding party to their stronghold in the hills. It was known that their numbers were formidable, and that their position was one which could easily be defended against a large force. Under these circumstances, the efforts to reduce them to submission would assume the character of a

war, requiring organization, preparation, and all the arrangements of a campaign.

All these matters were discussed by the men as they came in to the rendezvous at Captain Scott's homestead, and it was settled that the expedition must have sufficient strength to enable them to besiege the outlaws in their stronghold. For this purpose, runners were sent out to bring in all the fighting men of the district, leaders were chosen, and provisions and ammunition were made ready. A strong party was sent on the trail of the stolen cattle, to capture them before they could be got out of the way, and the remainder made preparations for camping in the hills.

Last Chance took advantage of the delay caused by these preparations, to keep his appointment with Kate Crozier.

He mounted his fleet mare, rode toward Captain Crozier's place, and met the object of his search at the distance of a mile from the plantation.

Kate was glad to see him, and did not scruple to let him know how glad she was. But there was anxiety mingled with her joy—fear for his safety, and distrust of what his opinion of her might be, if he should know who she was.

The young gentleman came near to driving all these thoughts out of her head, by the manner in which he met her, and by his evident delight at seeing her. His tones and glances were those of a lover, although his words were quite commonplace, the ordinary greeting of a casual acquaintance.

"You seem to be strangely troubled to-day," he said, as their horses sauntered along, side by side. "Has anything happened to displease you? If I could chase away that shadow, nothing would make me happier."

Kate looked up at him quite timidly, all her sauciness and self-reliance gone.

"You might chase it away," she answered, "if you would promise not to join that expedition of which you were speaking when we last met."

"I want to please you, but there are special considerations which drive me into that. I surely ought to help my friend when he is in such trouble, and it would be cowardly in me to hold back when all the country is rising."

"If all the country is rising, there will be enough without you. You are not one of our citizens, and have nothing to do with our affairs. Why should you risk your life, or bring yourself into trouble?"

"Can you give me no better reason than my personal convenience or safety?"

"How can I? If I should tell you what interest I have in the matter, you would despise me."

"Despise you? That would be impossible. Whatever others may have done, I am sure that there is no wrong in your heart."

"If you knew who I am, you would hate me."

"How could I hate you, when I—I must say it—I love you?"

Kate Crozier trembled in her seat, so that she seemed likely to fall; but a strong arm was around her in an instant, upholding and supporting her, and she rested upon it as if it belonged to her.

"You are saying this to please me," she said.

"With all my heart, I wish that it might please you," he replied.

"Perhaps you think that you love me, just now; but you know so little about me, and you have not learned who I am. And yet, I wish that it might be true."

The strong arms tightened around her, and a pair of bright eyes looked love into hers. The beautiful mare and spotted mustang acted as if they understood it and kept step as they walked slowly and closely together.

"It is true," he said. "Whatever else may be uncertain in this world, that is sure. I do know who you are, Kate. I know that Wiley Simmes married Ella Crozier. I saw it recorded in a Bible at Captain Crozier's house, and I suppose that he is your uncle."

"Oh, no!" sobbed Kate, as she dropped her bridle and covered her face with her hands. "He is my father!"

The shock was a severe one to Arthur Lynn. He had feared this, but had scouted the supposition and was not prepared to find it true. His arm dropped from her side, but it again encircled her the next moment, and he drew her closer to him.

"Well, and what of it?" he said. "I own that I hate him, and I have reason to hate him; but I love you. Whatever his faults may be, you are not responsible for any of them, and they are not reproduced in you. I am sorry that you are not the daughter of a better man; but I am sure that no better man had so sweet a daughter. Look up, Kate, dear Kate, and tell me that you love me."

"How can I?" she murmured. "I must leave you, and you must forget me. Our paths are so far apart that they can never come together. Why do you hate my father? But I need not ask that. Every one hates him. Every one must hate him."

"Every one has not the cause that I have to hate and pursue him. But I can't tell you what my reasons are. Is it not enough that I love you? It is not your fault that you are his daughter, and I doubt if you love him as a child might love its father. How is it that you are known as Kate Crozier, while his name is Simmes?"

"He gave me in charge of my uncle when I was an infant. This was just after my mother's death, and it was not until then that my uncle knew what a wild and wicked life he led. He wanted to separate me from that life, and for that much at least I ought to thank him. My uncle Robert brought me up, and I have always borne the name of Crozier. I believe that no one knows, outside of our own family, that I have not a right to that name, whatever people may suspect."

"No one need know it now. If you will change your name to mine, you will have a name that will belong to you, and that you can't be robbed of."

"You mustn't speak of that. I can have no such hope. I am Wiley Simmes's daughter, and that is what I must remain. It was not until I was grown that I was told who I was, and since that, I have been made to feel it. I have been given to understand that I am to marry my cousin, Lee Crozier, and I am afraid

that that must be my fate, though I dislike him more and more every day. My father insists upon it, and means to carry his purpose into effect."

"Do you want to make me hate him more than I hate him already? Do you mean to say that he intends to force you into marriage with a man you dislike? He can't do it, Kate. Unless you are willing to marry your cousin, you can never be made to marry him. No man has the right to make his daughter miserable for life—especially such a man as Wiley Simmes, who has forfeited every right he ever possessed in this world."

The path which the two were then following—or which their horses had taken of their own will and pleasure—led through a piece of timber, where the trees stood thickly on each side of the way. Their overarching boughs made a grateful shade and gave the lovers a sense of seclusion which a pleasanter frame of mind would have made very grateful to them.

'He shall never marry you to that man!' exclaimed Arthur Lynn, with the tone of one who settles a question by authority. 'He has no right over you whatever. I don't believe, Kate, that you are really the daughter of Wiley Simmes.'

A cry of rage came from the side of the path, and three men rushed out of the thicket, two of whom violently seized upon Arthur Lynn, and the third snatched the bridle of Kate Crozier's horse. In an instant the young gentleman was dragged from his mare, and his hands were tied behind his back.

CHAPTER XI.

SHEARING THE WOLF.

WHEN Arthur Lynn was able to look about and take note of his assailants, he perceived that they were Indians, or white men in the guise of Indians. He had had some experience among the red-men of the plains, and there were indications which led him to suspect that these were not genuine aborigines. This suspicion was confirmed when he heard the voice of their leader, who was a tall and stalwart man, with gray hair.

This personage was in a state of violent excitement. He stepped up to the young gentleman, and angrily shook his fist in his face.

"And are you the one who wants to persuade this girl that she is not the daughter of Wiley Simmes?" he said. "Here is her father, to speak for himself, and to tell you that you lie. I am Wiley Simmes; how do you like my looks?"

Arthur made no answer. He had been looking at Kate Crozier, who sat motionless upon her horse at a little distance. Now he faced the leader of his assailants, and bent upon him a gaze in which cool contempt struggled with intense hatred.

"Have I no right over my daughter?" resumed the white chief. "Shall I never marry her to a man of my choice? Perhaps you will prevent it. You look like it! I have a right over you just now, and I will make you feel it. I will put you where you will never care whether she marries or not."

The young gentleman continued silent, and answered the taunts of his antagonist only by a look of defiance,

"You call yourself Last Chance, do you? What a fool you were to bring such a name into this country! I will christen you again, and will change Last Chance to a Lost Chance."

The white chief had perpetrated this poor piece of wit on a previous occasion, and it may be believed that he was proud of it.

"Don't you suppose that I know who you are? Look me in the face if you dare! Yes; your eyes are like those of the others, and your forehead and nose and chin are like those Lynns. I knew it, as soon as you came into the country, before I had seen you, and now I am sure of it. I can't be fooled in one of those Lynns. You are the baby, are you? You were an infant at your mother's breast, the night I shot down your father, when I made an end of Judge Lynn. Yes; I own that I shot him. I never denied it. I swore that I would be revenged upon him, and I kept my oath. And you, the baby, have come down here to hunt Wiley Simmes? You have come to follow your two brothers, and you *shall* follow them. They are dead, and you shall be in the same fix in a few minutes. Ha! do you wince at that?"

The young gentleman had not winced; but a flush of indignation had overspread his countenance at the moment, and he had shuddered as he thought of the fate of his father and brothers.

"Bring me a lariat, Abram," said the white chief.

A rope of twisted hide was brought to him, and he dexterously knotted a slip-noose in an end of it. In obedience to his further directions, the captive's horse, which had been stopped by one of the men, was brought down the path, and Arthur Lynn was placed upon her back. As he was mounted Wiley Simmes threw the noose over his neck. Three other other horses, which had been concealed in the timber, were also brought out into the path, ready for their riders to mount.

"I will give you a chance," said Wiley Simmes, as he drew the noose close to his captive's neck. "If you will say that you are not one of those cursed Lynns, I will give you a chance to prove your words true. Come, now. What do you say. Isn't your life worth a lie, or do you mean to die game, like the rest of them? He won't speak. Abram, hand the rope up over that limb."

As the white chief handed the end of the lariat to one of his men, the proceedings were interrupted by a shriek from Kate.

"For God's sake, don't do that!" she exclaimed. "If you care for me, father, don't murder him!"

"Who wants to murder him?" harshly replied Simmes. "I only mean to tie him up, to keep him out of mischief."

"You mean to hang him there. What has he ever done to you, that you should kill him?"

"If I see a rattlesnake in the path, coiled up and ready to strike, shall I kill him, or wait until he has struck his fangs into me? I would be a fool if I shouldn't kill him for the harm he means to do."

"Grant me one favor," piteously entreated Kate. "and I will never ask another of you. I will do everything you wish me to do, if you will let him live."

"If he should kill me and marry you, I suppose you would be satisfied; but I mean to make sure that he shall do neither of those things. Haul in on the lariat, Abram, and make it fast to the tree."

Kate endeavored to throw herself from her horse, but was restrained by the man who held her bridle. By the direction of the white chief, she was then bound fast to the saddle, in a half-fainting condition, and her horse was led to a position from which she was unable to see what was going on.

The lariat was thrown over the limb of the tree, drawn close, and securely fastened to the trunk. The white chief and one of his men mounted their horses, and stationed themselves near Kate, ready to ride away when the tragedy should be ended. The third man held the bridle of the beautiful brown mare, waiting for the word to lead her away.

Arthur Lynn, seated on her back, felt the noose tightening around his neck, and knew that there was no hope of escape; but he was silent and defiant. This was to be the end of his hopes, the ruin of his scheme of vengeance.

He gave a last look to the declining sun, a last look to Kate, whom he could scarcely see, and involuntarily closed his eyes, as Wiley Simmes gave the word for the drop scene to fall on his drama of life.

The word was closely followed by the crack of a rifle, and of a yell like the howl of a wild beast.

The man at the mare's head spun around and fell, with a bullet in his brain, and the frightened animal sprung forward.

By a frantic effort Arthur burst the bonds that confined his arms, and threw up his hands to grasp the rope over his head. In his struggles to secure his own safety, he saw but little of the scene that followed.

Out of the forest rushed a creature all hair and skins. A smoking rifle was in his hand, and one hideous yell after another pealed from his throat as he ran down the path.

"The White Wolf!" shouted the man who was stationed with Simmes, and he stayed not upon the order of his going, but put spurs to his horse, and was out of sight in an instant.

Wiley Simmes uttered a cry of horror and dismay, and made no pause to examine the intruder or to oppose his intentions. He seized the bridle of Kate's horse, and galloped away like mad.

White Wolf stopped at the body of the false Indian whom he had slain, and turned it over as a wild animal might do.

"Wiley Simmes?" he muttered. "Wiley Simmes? No; he is off. There he goes! Whoop! I will find him yet!"

He too rushed away, leaving Arthur Lynn struggling in the air. —

CHAPTER XII. LED INTO A TRAP.

WHEN the horse darted out from under him, Arthur had succeeded in grasping the lariat with his left hand, and then seized it with the right. His neck was thus relieved of the strain, and he was able to think and act. He drew himself up, hand over hand, until he seated himself

on the stout branch of the tree, where he removed the noose, and looked about to see what had happened.

He first noticed the false Indian lying dead on the ground, and then saw White Wolf running frantically down the path, yelling as he went. He also caught a glimpse of the frightened riders, as they disappeared in the forest, and heard the rapid hoof-beats of their horses. In a few minutes there were no more sights or sounds of life.

Then he dropped down from the tree, and untied the lariat that was fastened at the trunk.

"I shall keep this," he said, shuddering as he looked at it.

The brown mare had been frightened into starting off with the other loose horse; but she was soon aware that her master was not on her back, and had sense enough to know that there was something wrong. She came walking toward him, and trotted up gayly when he whistled to her.

Arthur picked up his rifle, which had been thrown on the ground when he was captured, coiled the lariat and hung it on his saddle-bow, and mounted the mare.

When he was on her back he felt like himself again, and reflected upon what had occurred.

It was evident that White Wolf had fired the shot which killed the false Indian, and that he had frightened away the others. Wiley Simmes had taken his daughter with him in his flight, no doubt. She had been bound to her saddle, and could not resist, and was helplessly led away.

Why should not Arthur follow, and rescue her from the parent who was unfit to have control of her? He was but one man, and there were still two of his enemies; but he was well armed, and the odds did not daunt him.

He put spurs to his mare, confident of his ability to overtake the fugitives if he could keep them in sight.

He no longer heard the hoof-beats of their horses; but the tracks were plain in the forest path, and down the path he galloped at the brown mare's best gait.

When he had traveled at this headlong speed until he thought that he ought to be near enough to the fugitives to hear them, he paused and listened; but he heard nothing. Examining the path, and finding no tracks there, the conviction was forced upon him that they had taken another direction, and that he, in his furious haste, had passed the place where they had turned off without noticing it.

There was nothing for it but to go back and search for the trail, and this was a task which required time and patience. When he had found the trail, it was difficult to keep it, as it led through the forest, and he became painfully aware of the fact that his pursuit was likely to be unsuccessful.

After a while he came out of the timber, and found himself on an elevation from which he could see a long distance over the rolling prairie. Toward the west rose the hills, lofty, rugged, dark and forbidding. Between him and the hills were the persons whose trail he had been

following. They were so far away that he could only see three moving specks; but he was sure that there were three specks, and could not doubt who they were. He saw nothing of the wild man, nor had he seen him since he began his pursuit.

Arthur did not suppose that he would be able to overtake Wiley Simmes and his party before they could reach the hills. That seemed to be out of the question. Fleet as the brown mare was, she could not gain on them sufficiently to destroy the advantage of the start they had. But he could at least follow them, and could make sure of the route they took, so that he might seek them out when he should be able to do so.

So he spoke to the brown mare, and she fairly flew over the prairie turf, entering into the spirit of the chase as if in full sympathy with her master.

She kept up this rate of speed, while the hills loomed up larger and more lofty, until Arthur was near enough to the objects of his pursuit to distinguish their shapes and to know that the riders were two men and one woman.

They had been moving toward the hills quite leisurely for some time, as if feeling that they were safe from pursuit; but soon their horses began to gallop, as if they had become aware of the fact that they were followed.

Arthur Lynn let his mare go, at an increased rate of speed, and gradually gained on the party he was pursuing. But they were sure to gain the hills, and to be lost in the recesses, before he could possibly overtake them. Never mind: he would follow the trail, and would track them to their hiding-place, let the result be what it might.

He was still on the plain when he lost sight of them in the timber at the foot of the hills; but he noted the place where they left the prairie, and was sure that he could not miss it. He knew it when he reached it, and knew that he had seen it before. There was a plain trail through the timber, which led up, through a difficult pass, to the stronghold of Glade Oak and Left Hand and their followers. It was the same trail which Arthur had followed with Jack Scott, when they tracked the marauders who had carried away the ranger's wife and child.

The young gentleman held a debate with himself as he entered the timber, but without pausing, as to the propriety of continuing the pursuit. It was not likely that he could accomplish anything, and night was coming on. But there would be a moon, and the night would be a protection to him, rather than a hindrance. He concluded that he would go on some distance further, and would then conceal his horse and continue his search on foot, or would return, as circumstances might suggest.

He went on, and the dusk grew denser, and the pass was more narrow and difficult. Suddenly he was brought to a halt by a hail, followed by a harsh, sarcastic laugh.

Looking up, he saw a face peering over a cliff, a few yards in advance of him and to the right. By the light of the rising moon he recognized the painted face as that of his would-be murderer of the forest, of Wiley Simmes,

"It is you, is it?" said the outlaw, with a hideous grin. "I didn't think you would get out of that scrape I left you in. As your luck is so good, it won't be worth while for me to try that game again. Just give up, now, without any fuss, and we will go easy with you. Throw down your weapons, and your life shall be spared."

Instead of accepting this invitation, Arthur turned his horse's head, in an attempt to escape from the pass.

As he did so, there was an almost simultaneous report of two rifles, and he knew that their leaden contents had lodged in the head of his horse.

It was a pitiful time for the beautiful brown mare—a sad moment for her when he had determined to enter the pass and follow that trail. He jumped to the ground as she sunk under him, and for a moment his thoughts were diverted from his own position by sorrow for her as he saw her quivering in the agonies of death.

Then he started to run down the pass to get out of the way of more shots; but a shrill whistle sounded at the rear, and he was confronted by several men—Indians, apparently—who arose from behind the rocks at each side of the way. As he paused and raised his rifle, they instantly sunk back into their places of concealment.

A moment's reflection told him that a trap had been set for him; that those Indians might have waylaid and killed him as he went up, if they had chosen to do so.

It was plain that they had determined to take him alive. He was equally determined that he would not be taken alive.

As the men in front of him seemed to be in no hurry to show themselves again, he had begun to walk slowly down the pass, when one of them suddenly raised his head from behind a rock.

Arthur leveled his rifle and fired, but without effect, and all of them sprung out from their places of concealment and rushed toward him. They had succeeded in drawing his fire, and from front and rear they hastened to close in upon him.

He drew his revolver and backed up against the rocky wall of the pass, resolved to fight it out to the last.

Before he could pull trigger, there came a dropping fire of rifle-shots, which created the greatest surprise and consternation among his assailants. Some fell silently in their tracks, others were yelling with agony, others were groaning or cursing, others set their legs at work to take them out of the reach of danger, and others stood as if stupefied, so surprised by the sudden shock that their powers were paralyzed.

A yell from Texan throats told Arthur that he had friends at hand, and he opened a rapid fire with his revolver upon his remaining antagonists.

In a moment he was surrounded by Texans, and his hand was pressed in the hearty grasp of Captain Jack Scott.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FINANCIAL DIFFICULTY.

THE jealousy between the Kiowas and their white allies had reached such an extent, that a

mixed party was sent away in charge of the cattle and horses that had been stolen from Captain Scott's ranch.

Left Hand was convinced that the white men had not only overreached him and his people in many ways, but had actually stolen a large portion of the proceeds of their joint robberies, returning to the band much smaller amounts than they had received. They only wanted positive proof of the delinquencies of the white men. If such proof could be obtained, they were determined that there should be a serious falling out among rogues, whether honest men should get their dues or not.

It was with this object that a mixed party was sent in charge of the stolen cattle, composed of six white men and six Kiowas. A baker's dozen was completed by the leader of the party, a half-breed known as Joe Jack, who was supposed to belong to neither side, although Glade Oak believed that he secretly favored the whites.

The route of the party wae to take them about a hundred miles toward the west, where they were to meet Alvar Nunez, a Mexican engaged in illicit trading across the Rio Grande, who was to take the stolen cattle into Mexico, where it would be out of the reach of any reclamation by the Texans.

The cattle were hurried forward with all possible speed, and the rendezvous was reached without any serious accident or molestation. Nunez was found at an old adobe building on a deserted ranch, which he had long used as his headquarters on the Texan side of the river.

The cattle and horses were numbered, and a bargain was soon struck with the veteran contrabandist. Although the price agreed upon was necessarily far below the real value of the stock, it was a considerable sum, sufficient to arouse the avarice of the white men, and to cause the Indians to open their eyes in astonishment. Not only was the herd more valuable than any which had yet been collected on a single raid, but the price named by the Mexican was largely in excess of any thing that Glade Oak had returned to the band as the result of his transactions.

Immediately the Kiowas put in their claim to the sum, and insisted that it should be paid to them.

To this the whites seriously objected, protesting against the manifest injustice of such a proceeding.

"Are we not as honest as the white men?" argued the Kiowas. "They have always received every thing that has been paid for the common benefit, and we have not objected. It is our turn now, and we will manage the business and collect the money. If there should be any more than is owing to us, we will pay it over to the white men. In that way they have managed the business for us, and in that way we intend to manage it for them."

This seemed to be fair enough on the surface; but the white men still objected, and the Kiowas were finally induced to modify their demand, and consent to an equal division.

Then it transpired that Nunez, who had listened to the discussion with sublime indifference, had no money to pay them. That is to say,

he had nothing that the uncivilized mind could appreciate as money, and proposed to cancel his indebtedness as he had been in the habit of doing when dealing with the white chief, by the acceptance of a Mexican banker at Matamoras, drawn in favor of Captain Robert Crozier.

Extremely dissatisfied were the Kiowas with this turn of affairs. It was simply incredible to them that such a drove of cattle and horses could be paid for by a mere scrap of paper, and their suspicious noses smelt a cheat at once. They interrogated Nunez at some length, and he explained to them the nature of the transaction as well as he could, telling them that the holder of the draft would be entitled to receive the money on presenting it to Captain Crozier, who would collect the amount from the Matamoras banker who was responsible for its payment.

At this the Kiowas retired for consultation, and discussed the question with a vast amount of jabber and gesticulation. The conclusion at which they arrived was by no means satisfactory to themselves; but they saw no other chance to get their rights. If they were to receive nothing for the cattle but a scrap of paper, and if the prospect of money depended upon the possession of the scrap of paper, it was important that the scrap of paper should be placed in their hands.

Such was the conclusion they announced to Nunez and their white allies, declaring their unalterable determination to have and to hold to the paper until their accounts should be settled and their money forthcoming.

To this determination the white men of the party stubbornly opposed their own. They had received their instructions from Glade Oak, and had no idea of letting such a sum of money slip out of their fingers. They well knew that their chance to handle the money would be gone if the Indians should get possession of the paper, and they could not think of giving up that chance. Therefore they declared that the draft must be given to them, as they alone knew how to use it, and so they had always successfully managed that part of the business.

The white men would not have been so bold and peremptory, if they had not believed themselves to be the stronger party, and if they had not counted upon the assistance of Nunez and his men. This last element was allowed in their calculations without sufficient reason, as it appeared, as the Mexicans carefully stood aloof, and refrained from espousing either side of the vexed question.

At last the discussion became so hot and heavy that the disputants were on the point of resorting to their weapons for the purpose of maintaining their claims, when the veteran contrabandist saw fit to step in as an arbitrator.

He made a speech to the assembled wranglers, in a jargon which was a strange compound of the Spanish and English languages, and some Indian dialects, but which was sufficiently well understood by those to whom he spoke.

He told them, in effect, that they were making fools of themselves, that valuable time was being wasted, and that he could not allow himself to be hindered any longer by their quarrels. He had noticed their leader, Joe Jack, and had perceived that he had taken no part in the con-

troversy. He believed Joe Jack, therefore, to be a disinterested person, and would proceed to settle the question by placing the draft in his hands, to be retained by him until a joint council of the Kiowas and their allies should decide what was to be done with it. Having determined on this course, he had nothing more to do with the business, and washed his hands of them and their quarrels.

This decision was received by the Kiowas with a howl of indignation, and they vowed they would not submit to it. The white men, on the other hand, applauded its justice.

Joe Jack accepted the trust, and took the paper, and Nunez, believing that he had performed his duty to the best of his ability, rode away, and ordered his herdsmen to get the cattle together, preparatory to driving them to the Rio Grande.

But the Kiowas, acting under the orders of Left Hand, had fully determined to get possession of the money for that drove, or of its equivalent. They drew off together, and their hostile intentions were soon evident to the others, who also selected a position and prepared for a conflict.

The first move of the enraged Indians was to order Joe Jack to deliver to them the paper in controversy, assuring him that it would be perilous for him to refuse. This demonstration at once drove the half-breed to the side of the white men, who were prepared to support him in keeping his trust, and who thus gained a good rifle and a reliable fighter.

Joe Jack's refusal brought the quarrel to a crisis, and the first shot was followed by a volley from each side.

Having discharged their principal weapons, the combatants did not wait to reload, but rushed to close quarters, determined to fight out their difficulty to the direst extremity.

Shots and blows and yells and shrieks filled the air, and the *melee* resembled, as much as anything else, a village dog-fight, to which all the dogs in the neighborhood had been invited. The Mexicans, as they surveyed the scene from their saddles, were excited and amused spectators, heartily wishing that both sides would whip.

The battle was of brief duration. It was decided by the superior arms of the white men, most of whom carried pistols; by the superior strength which availed them at close quarters, and by the fact that Joe Jack naturally felt it his duty to aid them when he was driven to their side.

In fifteen minutes the affair was ended, and every Kiowa was stretched dead upon the prairie. But their antagonists had also suffered severely, and only three white men, besides Joe Jack, were left alive, and the half-breed was badly wounded.

The survivors, however, had won the fight, and they crowded lustily over their victory.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN IMPORTANT ARREST.

"THERE'S many a slip, 'twixt cup and lip."

"When rogues fall out, honest men get their due."

These trite and true maxims were abundantly

verified by the conflict at Nunez Ranch and its results.

It had been a matter of the greatest importance to the outlaws, considering the value of the stolen property and the man from whom it had been stolen, that the drove should be hurried across the Rio Grande with the greatest possible dispatch, as it might be expected that Jack Scott and his neighbors would lose no time in putting a party on the trail.

This was entirely lost sight of by the rival claimants, when they were debating about the money which they were to receive for the cattle. As Nunez told them, much valuable time was lost, and they were throwing away, not only the chances of getting the cattle safely into Mexico, but the chances of retaining their own lives and liberties.

A strong party had been sent on the trail, by Captain Scott and his friends, as soon as it was possible to get a sufficient number together. These men were all well mounted and well armed, and it was more than possible that they might overtake the cattle-thieves, although the latter had such an advantage in the start.

The possibility was made a certainty by the delay of the outlaws after they met Nunez. The party of Texans came in sight of them just as they had commenced their affray, and when nothing short of an earthquake would have prevented them from fighting their quarrel out.

Of course the Texans perceived that something had gone wrong with their enemies, and were not long in reaching the conclusion that they were fighting among themselves. This exactly suited the pursuers, who immediately made preparations to surround the combatants and capture them all. They were in no hurry to attack, as it was probable that the longer they waited, as affairs then were, the fewer they would have to fight. They spread themselves over the prairie, so as to draw a cordon around the scene of conflict, and to be ready to "take a hand" as soon as the other players should tire of the game.

Thus it was, that while the survivors were exulting over their victory, they suddenly discovered that they had been surrounded by an overwhelming force of Texans, who were bearing down upon them on all sides.

Some of them attempted to make their escape, although escape was manifestly impossible, and the result was that two of them were shot down. The only white man who survived, together with the wounded half-breed, fell into the hands of the Texans.

The greater part of the force at once set out toward the west, to recapture the cattle, which had not yet got out of sight. Nunez and his Mexicans, who had made an early discovery of the approach of the Texans, had put their horses to the top of their speed to get out of the way, leaving the drove to shift for itself. The cattle and horses, therefore, were overtaken, and driven back without difficulty.

In the mean time, those who had not gone on this errand had been examining the prisoners and searching them. The search of Joe Jack brought to light the draft in favor of Captain Crozier, which occasioned considerable wonder and excitement among the Texans,

The leader of the pursuing party was Squire Abel Winder, a gentleman who was highly esteemed by his neighbors, and who was possessed of a fair share of intelligence. As soon as he understood the nature of the draft, he perceived that there was a point to be made for the cause of law and order. It had been more than suspected that Captain Crozier had assisted the outlaws in some of their operations, and here was proof to that effect, needing only a little positive evidence of his own knowledge and intention, to connect him with it beyond the possibility of mistake.

Squire Winder proposed to get this evidence from his prisoners, and for that purpose questioned them singly, telling them that their lives would be spared if they would confess all they knew about the matter, and explain Captain Crozier's connection with the cattle-stealing business.

The white man was stubborn in his refusal to do anything of the kind.

With Joe Jack the squire had better success. That individual knew that he deserved death for his crimes, and was glad of an opportunity to slip his neck out of a noose.

On condition that his life should be spared, he told all he knew about the draft that had been found upon him, and the dispute that had risen concerning it. He also stated that this was not the first draft which had been received in that way, drawn in favor of the same person and for the same purpose. Although he had but little comprehension of the nature of exchange, it was evident from his declarations that payment for the cattle which the outlaws had run off into Mexico had generally been received in such drafts, which had been negotiated by Captain Crozier, and there could be no doubt that the negotiator knew how and for what purpose the drafts had been received.

"That settles it, boys," said the squire. "We have got the thing dead on Captain Crozier now, and he must be arrested."

The wounds of Joe Jack were cared for, and the other prisoner was securely bound, and both men were sent back in charge of the party which was to drive back the recaptured cattle. Squire Winder and three of the rangers started off in another direction, intending to take the shortest route to Captain Crozier's plantation.

In course of time they reached their destination, and found Captain Crozier at home. He had just returned from the journey which he had taken in accordance with the directions of his brother-in-law, and had found the household in a state of confusion and excitement, consequent upon the disappearance of Kate. The young lady had gone out to ride, and had not since been seen or heard of. Search had been made, but had failed to reveal any trace of her.

Captain Crozier tried to treat the disappearance lightly, saying that she had probably gone to visit a friend, and would return when it suited her to do so.

In reality, however, he could not doubt what had become of her, and her absence and its cause and manner threw him into the deepest dejection. He shut himself up in his own room, refusing to see any person or to transact any sort of business.

He was in this stupor and seclusion when Squire Winder and his men called upon him. He wanted to refuse to see them; but they were men who were not to be refused, and they forced their way into his presence. He was surprised at their visit, and his surprise was followed by anxiety, as he quickly perceived that their manner was not altogether friendly.

"I would like to know whether you can give me cash for this paper," said the squire, as he showed the draft which had been taken from Joe Jack.

As soon as Captain Crozier perceived what it was, the blood rushed to his face, and he hung his head in confusion.

"What is it?" he stammered. "Where did you get that? What does it mean?"

"It appears to be a draft," replied Winder, "drawn in your favor, by Alvar Nunez, or some Mexican merchant or banker, by whom it is accepted. I don't suppose it is necessary to tell you what it is for."

"But I know nothing about it. I never saw it before. It is none of my business."

"That won't do, captain. I am as sorry to catch you in this scrape as you are to be caught in it; but I must do my duty. You have been suspected for a long time of being engaged in this sort of business, and now we have the proof. This draft is for Jack Scott's stolen cattle. The man who helps a thief to dispose of stolen goods is as bad as the thief, and on that ground I arrest you."

"Arrest me? You have no right. You can't prove anything against me. I shall expect a fair trial," replied Captain Crozier.

"You shall have as fair a trial as white men can give you. As for the proof, we have got that down to a nail. You may get ready, Captain Crozier, and come with us."

Crestfallen and quite broken down, the old gentleman was led away, and was taken to the camp of the rangers, who were besieging the outlaws at their stronghold in the hills. The rescue of Last Chance had been followed by a reconnoissance up the pass, which had shown that the position of the enemy was apparently impregnable, and the assailants had settled down to contrive ways and means to get at the outlaws or to starve them into a surrender.

"Just as I expected," said Captain Scott, when Abel Winder reported the result of the expedition and the capture of Crozier. "I was sure that he was mixed up in the business, and am glad that we have got the proof. I am inclined to think, squire, that we may be able to draw some important facts out of him, if we will give him a private examination, and offer him some inducements to tell the truth."

This was agreed to, and Last Chance, at his request, was allowed to be present at the examination.

They could not have found Captain Crozier in a better mood for wringing a confession from him. He was completely disheartened, and his feelings were in such a state that they could be easily worked upon by a skillful hand.

Jack Scott spoke to him kindly, and struck at the root of the matter at once.

"There is no use in talking about this business, Captain Crozier" he said, "The proof

that we have is very strong, and can't be got over. But we know that Glade Oak is Wiley Simmes, and that Wiley Simmes is your brother-in-law. Some of us suppose that you may have been imposed upon, that he has made a tool of you, and that your guilt is not near as great as his. We are disposed to give you every chance in our power, to deal as kindly with you as we can. The best thing that you can do, therefore, will be to make a clean breast of it, and to tell us all you know about the business, from beginning to end."

"I am ready to do so," replied Crozier. "I wanted to do it long ago, but have held back for my daughter's sake."

"Your daughter?" exclaimed Last Chance. "What daughter?"

"Kate Crozier."

"Is she not the daughter of Wiley Simmes?"

"She is not. I will explain it all, and then you may judge me. When I became acquainted with Wiley Simmes, and when he married my sister, I supposed him to be a man of good character. It was not until after the death of my wife that I learned what sort of a life he was leading, and had been leading for a long time. Before this, however, there had been an event which had ruined me for life. The nature of that event concerns noone here, and I had rather not go into particulars. I had not really been guilty of a crime, but the proof was such that I could not show my innocence. That proof was in the hands of Wiley Simmes, and he used it mercilessly. Growing out of the same affair were financial difficulties, which threatened to sweep away the labor of years and leave me penniless. Thus it came about that Wiley Simmes was the master, not only of my reputation, if not my life, but also of my fortune, and I gradually became his slave."

"His wife left him a son, and my wife left me a daughter. When both were infants, he proposed that his child should take the name of Crozier, and should be brought up as my son, because he wished the boy to inherit all his father's gains, but none of his father's reputation. He also proposed that my daughter should be known as the child of Wiley Simmes, in case there should be any question of her parentage. I cannot tell you how humiliating this was to me, how I hated it, and how I dreaded the consequences it might bring. But I was in his power, and was obliged to submit. He also compelled me to submit to many other things that were hateful to me, though he never forced me into any of his lawless enterprises. On three occasions I have been obliged to negotiate drafts for him, similar to that which Mr. Winder showed me. There was nothing wrong on the face of them, and he insisted that they could not bring me into difficulty. He gave me notice of this draft, and promised that he would never trouble me with another. It is likeiy that he will keep that promise."

"Do you know where your daughter is now?" asked Last Chance.

"It was the part of his programme that my daughter should become the wife of his son. That was always his intention. I suppose that she is in his possession now, and that his purpose is to marry her to his son. It would have been

better for me, as well as for her, if I had broken loose from him and defied him long ago; but I suffered the deception to be kept up, and the result is killing me."

"Another question. My name is Arthur Lynn, and I am the son of Judge Lynn, formerly of Kentucky. I suppose you have heard of him. If so, you can guess the object that has brought me to Texas. Can you tell me what has become of my two brothers?"

"I can tell you nothing of my own knowledge," replied Captain Crozier. "Wiley Simmes has told me that they are dead."

Captain Crozier went on to explain his dealings with Simmes, and the complications into which the latter had led him; but nothing more of special importance was elicited.

CHAPTER XV.

INTERNAL DISSENSIONS.

ARTHUR LYNN had been correct in his supposition that Wiley Simmes hastened to reach the hills with Kate Crozier because he believed that he was pursued by White Wolf. That belief continued until he came to the head of the pass, where he briefly informed the guards of what had happened. The lookouts, however, soon put an end to his fears, by announcing that the person in pursuit was not White Wolf, but a stranger. His own observations soon convinced him that it was Arthur Lynn.

Having sent Kate to the camp, in charge of her cousin, he made preparations to entrap the solitary pursuer, with the result which has been noted.

The rescue of Arthur Lynn, and the facts which it developed, introduced some very serious complications into the affairs of Wiley Simmes and the rest of the outlaws.

Jack Scott had gone up the pass with a strong force, for the purpose of reconnoitering the position of the enemy and possibly surprising them, and had been just in time to save his friend from capture.

Without waiting for any explanations, he had rushed up the pass on the heels of the fugitives, hoping to follow them in and capture the camp before the rest of the outlaws could rally to the assistance of their comrades.

In this attempt he was nearly successful, and he would probably have secured a position at the head of the pass, if the Kiowas had not been more on the alert than their white allies were. They ran to the defense, and reached the point of danger just as the Texans were about to overpower the few white men who had turned to fight them.

Captain Scott soon perceived that the head of the pass, if not an absolutely impregnable position, could be defended by a small force against any body of men he could bring to attack it. He drew his men off, without having suffered any serious loss, and established his camp where it would effectually block up the passage.

The outlaws sent out scouts to inquire into the meaning of this demonstration, and they reported that the stronghold was besieged by a large force of Texans, who had evidently "come to stay," and who were hourly receiving accessions to their numbers.

This intelligence was serious indeed, and put

a damper upon the spirits of all, especially the Indians, who saw nothing but danger and disaster in store for them. They had so long been committing their depredations with impunity, and had so long been accustomed to nothing but success, that they could not contemplate with any sort of serenity the idea of being besieged, cooped up, starved out, and probably exterminated at the last. Glade Oak had no patience with their clamorous complaints, and told them that they had brought the calamity upon themselves, that they had insisted upon just such a raid as that upon which he had led them, that he had warned them of the consequences, and that they could not blame him if the result should prove to be what he had told them it would be.

After a while, all settled down to consider the matter calmly, and to make the best of the situation.

It was believed to be certain that the besiegers would be unable to get into the valley, so long as the head of the pass should be defended, and the question was reduced to one of ability to stand a siege. The outlaws were well supplied with ammunition, and they were in no fear of falling short of provisions, as they had a few cattle, and could fall back on their horses as a last resort. It was true that there was little grass in the valley for maintaining the stock, but they hoped that the Texan force would gradually disperse, and finally abandon the attempt, before their resources should be entirely exhausted.

The white chief seemed to take little interest in these discussions, to be quite indifferent to questions of siege or defense. He was gloomy and irritable, going restlessly about with a care-worn and cast-down appearance, which was quite out of keeping with his usual character. It was the resurrection of White Wolf that chiefly troubled him, and on this subject he conversed freely with Sam Peters, the only man who was really in his confidence.

"I don't understand it at all," he said, "and it bothers me mighty. You saw that creature when we chased him along the ledge, and when he jumped off the cliff. That was in plain sight, right before the eyes of several of us, and there can't be any doubt that he made the jump. It must have killed him. How can it have failed to kill him? When he made his appearance on the ledge up yonder, and carried off that woman and her child, I was sure that it was his ghost. You know that the guards would never have allowed him to pass up from below, and it is certain that no mortal man could have got there and got away from there as he did."

"Are you sure that there ain't some way of gittin' down the cliff or through it?" asked Peters.

"Through it! A ghost might pass through solid rock, I suppose, but nothing living could. I have examined the ledge carefully, and there is not as much as a track for a squirrel up the cliff. A ghost can go anywhere, Sam, and nothing but a ghost could get up there. But when he came upon us in the timber, where we were stringing up that young hound from Kentucky, I must admit that he gave me a shock. He yelled like a live man then, and shot

like a live man, too, laying Bill Weathers out as stiff as a shingle. I don't know but a ghost might give a yell; but who ever heard of a ghost firing a rifle?"

"Ghost or no ghost," replied Peters, "he yelled like a live critter when we saw him on the ledge that night. If a ghost can yell as he did then, and carry off a woman and a child, he surely mought yell out in the timber, and fire a rifle, too."

"That is true; but I saw him in the daylight, and who ever heard of ghosts showing themselves in the daylight?"

"I can't settle the thing, old man. I wouldn't like to feel that he was arter me—that's all."

"I hope you have got out of the notion, Sam, that I was trying to play a game on you, when the woman was lost."

"Yes, I have got out of that notion. I don't see how you could have made anything by it, and, you ain't apt to play games that don't pay."

"That's a sensible way of putting it," muttered Simmes, as he walked away to nurse his moodiness elsewhere.

Kate Crozier seemed to share in the general depression, because she was supping sorrow enough of her own. The lariat with which she had been bound to the saddle had chafed and hurt her so, that she could hardly stand erect when she was allowed to dismount. She was also mourning for the loss of Last Chance. Whatever it might have been that had frightened away Wiley Simmes and his followers, she knew that they had left her lover struggling in the air with a noose around his neck, and she had no reason to hope that he might have escaped the fate that was intended for him. Her anxiety for herself, which would otherwise have absorbed her, was quite lost in the contemplation of this calamity.

It was very ungraciously, therefore, that she received her cousin when he came to meet her and escorted her to the camp. She was not surprised to see him there, and the fact of his presence added to her horror of the purpose for which she had been brought into the hills.

She refused to take his hand, or even to speak to him, and her contemptuous conduct aroused his hot temper, until he was foolish enough to taunt her with her love for Last Chance.

"I know what is the matter with you," he said. "You have fallen in love with that upstart stranger who won the race at Redwood. But you had better forget him as soon as you can, for my uncle has laid a trap to catch him as he comes up the pass."

"As he comes up the pass?" eagerly exclaimed Kate. "Is he coming up the pass?"

"Yes. I saw him following you across the plain, and was sure of the man. He can't help falling into the trap as he comes up the pass, and there will soon be an end of him."

Kate could not repress a cry of delight. If her lover had escaped the death that threatened him in the timber, he must bear a charmed life, and she could hardly fear any further danger for him.

The subsequent proceeding puzzled her. There was so much shooting down the pass, that she was sure there must be more than one in the

trap. Then there was such an alarm and uproar in the camp, and such strong evidence of heavy fighting at the head of the pass that the conclusion was forced upon her that those who set the trap had been beaten at their own game.

Nothing further of importance occurred until the next day.

The operations against the outlaws' stronghold had assumed the character of a siege, and the besiegers sent in a flag of truce, offering to exchange two prisoners, known as Joe Jack and Arkansas Pete, for Captain Scott's wife and child.

This was the first intimation which the outlaws had had of the destruction of the party which had been sent off in charge of the cattle, and it caused the greatest consternation among them. As Scott's wife and child were not in their possession, they could not make the exchanges. But Glade Oak was unwilling that this fact should be known, and he sent back the flag of truce as it had come, with a defiant message to the assailants.

The Kiowas, however, were by no means satisfied with the state of affairs. They felt sure that the lost party would never have been overtaken and destroyed if there had not been dissensions among themselves, and that those dissensions must have been caused by treachery or cheating on the part of whites. They were anxious to learn the truth of the matter, from the prisoners in the hands of the Texans, and thought that it might be possible for them to make terms for themselves with their adversaries, by acting independently of Glade Oak and his followers.

With these views they sent a deputation, composed of Left Hand and a prominent warrior, to the camp of the Texans.

Captain Scott and his friends soon penetrated the design of the red envoys, and fed the flame that was already burning in their hearts, and gave them all the information they had to give, concerning the recapture of the cattle and the contest at Nunez's Ranch. They also permitted them to converse freely with the prisoners, and thus completed the work which had been so well begun.

Joe Jack and Arkansas Pete, who were thoroughly indignant at Glade Oak because of his refusal to listen to a proposition for their exchange, and were stimulated by certain hopes held out by their captors, told all they knew of the system of cheating which had long been practiced by Glade Oak, and of the protest of the Kiowas in Joe Jack's party, which had led to their slaughter and the capture of the survivors.

When the indignation of Left Hand and his companion had been fairly worked up, the leaders of the Texans held an interview with them, at which promises were made, and inducements were held out, the tendency of which was to inspire the Kiowas with hopes of their own safety, and to impel them to seek the destruction of their white allies. In this temper, and with purposes which will hereafter become apparent, they returned to the valley.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CAPTURE OF WHITE WOLF.

It has been noted that Arkansas Pete was so

angry with Glade Oak, because of the cavalier manner in which the latter had treated the proposition for an exchange of prisoners, that he was ready to reveal to the Kiowas the style in which they had been cheated and ill-treated by their white allies. He went further than this; in consideration of the promise that his life should be spared he told the leaders of the Texans of a secret pass, through which the outlaws might be able to escape if they should be driven to extremity. It was true that they would be obliged to leave their animals in the valley, as that means of egress was impracticable for horses; but it was to be supposed that they would even prefer to be "set afoot"—terrible as that alternative was to them—rather than lose their lives.

This information was of the greatest importance to the Texans, who were glad of an opportunity to complete the blockade of their enemies, if not to force their way into the valley. They easily persuaded Arkansas Pete to guide them to the pass, and Captain Scott and Arthur Lynn, with a detachment of rangers, went in search of it.

Their guide led them through the roughest and wildest part of the hills, where their route was crossed by cliffs and seamed by ravines, so that it was with difficulty that they were able to make any progress.

It was late in the afternoon, therefore, although they had started at an early hour in the morning, when they reached a narrow and difficult opening between two cliffs, which Arkansas Pete declared to be the outlet of the pass to which he was to guide them.

They had sat down to rest awhile, before attempting to explore its intricacies, when they were startled by a strange noise above them.

The noise came from the top of a hill, at the foot of which they were resting. It was not high, but was quite steep, nearly smooth, and with no growth on the side but small and scanty bushes. The noise was at first a snarling, complaining cry, as of some wild animal in distress; then some stones and gravel came rattling down; then there was a breaking, crashing sound, as of some heavy body tumbling down the declivity.

Looking up, they saw that wild creature which had twice appeared to Arthur Lynn—once when he was accompanied by his friend Scott, and once when his neck was in danger after his capture by Wiley Simmes. It was White Wolf, who had been spying about to see who and what the intruders were, and who had missed his footing, and was rolling down the hill.

As he fell, he grasped blindly at the stunted bushes on the way; but they hardly retarded his career, and he came rolling and floundering down, keeping up the snarling, complaining noise which had first attracted the attention of the rangers, until he came to a little ledge, below which the rocks curved inward, leaving a clear fall of about twenty feet.

He made a brief stoppage at the ledge, clinging to the rock for a few seconds, and then dropped helplessly upon the ground below.

"We have got him now, Chancy," said Jack

Scott, "and we must find out what is the matter with him."

The fall had stunned the creature, and he lay motionless upon the ground. Jack Scott and his friend bent over him, waiting for animation to return, and their companions stood around, wondering and questioning.

White Wolf had had a severe fall, but had sustained no serious damage, beyond a few scratches and bruises, and the stunning blow from which he presently recovered.

When his eyes were open to his situation, he suddenly sprung to his feet, and endeavored to escape; but his hurts had weakened him, and he was in the grasp of strong arms. Jack Scott and Arthur Lynn held him firmly, at the same time speaking to him kindly, endeavoring to restrain and soothe him. Their efforts were effectual, and he soon became calm, and replied to their well-meaning words.

"Wiley Simmes? Wiley Simmes?" he muttered. "No; he is not here. But I will find him yet. Let me go and look for him?"

"What have you to do with Wiley Simmes, poor fellow?" asked Scott, stroking him as he would a dog. "What has Wiley Simmes done to you? Tell us what is the matter."

"Wiley Simmes? I was his White Wolf, and he chained me up and tortured me. But it is my turn now. Let me go and find him."

"You shall go with us. We are all going to search for Wiley Simmes, and we will help you. Tell us what he has done to you. Do you know who you are?"

"No. I have been mad; but I am not mad now—not just now. I have never hurt *her*. She has been good to me, and I have been good to her. I won't hurt *you*, if you are good to me; but I will tear the heart out of Wiley Simmes. See! I wear his chain, so that I must remember him. It hurt me; but she has cured the hurts, and has tied it up, so that it hurts me no more."

"She! Who is she?" asked Captain Scott.

"Tennie," replied White Wolf, smiling as he spoke the name.

"Tennie! Who is Tennie? Where is she? For God's sake tell me what you mean!"

"She is my sister, and she is good to me. I stole her from Wiley Simmes and his vultures. There she is!"

As White Wolf spoke, he pointed toward a ledge, high up in the face of a cliff, where a woman could be seen standing, waving a handkerchief and holding up a child. It was Tennessee Scott, who had recognized her husband, even at that distance, and was making efforts to attract his attention.

"It is Tennie! It is my dear wife!" frantically exclaimed Captain Scott. "She is alive and safe! But how did she ever get up there? How can we get to her? Will you show us the way?"

White Wolf looked earnestly in the face of the joyful husband for a few moments, and then nodded his head.

"Come!" he said, and trotted away toward the cliff, closely followed by Captain Scott and Arthur Lynn.

It was a difficult path that they trod in ascending the cliff, and the route was a tedious

one; but they finally crawled in at a hole in the face of the cliff, where White Wolf rolled away a large stone which covered the entrance to the cavern in which he had concealed his charge.

The meeting between Jack Scott and his recovered wife and child was more than joyful—it was rapturous. This was so infinitely better than the ranger had expected or dared to hope for, that his heart was full of gratitude, and he felt, at the moment, that he could easily forgive all his enemies. When Tennie told him how she had been snatched from the grasp of the outlaws, he absolutely embraced White Wolf, and testified his thankfulness so plainly, that even that wild creature understood it and was overcome by it. He had so tenderly cared for the mother and her child, supplying their wants by making forays upon the camp of the outlaws, that Tennie declared that she had had nothing to trouble her, except her anxiety for her husband. She might have left the cavern, during the absence of White Wolf, but feared that she might lose herself or fall into the hands of the outlaws, and concluded that she had better remain where she was, hoping that the mind of her protector would gradually clear, and that he would return her to her friends.

As it would be impossible for the Texans to reach their camp that night, they concluded to occupy the cavern until morning, and both Jack Scott and Arthur Lynn endeavored to make friends with White Wolf, seeking to draw him out and to learn something of his history.

But neither of them could do as much with him as Tennie could, and she was only able to induce him to repeat the statement that he was Wiley Simmes's pet White Wolf, that he had been chained up and tortured, and that he would tear out the heart of Wiley Simmes and give his flesh to the buzzards.

"I have a wild suspicion," said Arthur Lynn to his friend, in a whisper. "There is no reason for it, I know, but it has struck me as possible that this poor fellow may be one of my brothers."

"It is possible," replied Scott; "but you mustn't build anything on that."

"I won't. I mean to sleep on it. If it should prove true, there is another score for Wiley Simmes to settle."

In the morning, when they started to leave the cavern, White Wolf seemed to be unable to comprehend the condition of affairs, and earnestly protested that Tennie should not be taken away from him.

"But you are going with us, my poor fellow," said Captain Scott, "and we will hunt for Wiley Simmes, and you shall give his flesh to the buzzards."

White Wolf was satisfied with this promise, and was easily persuaded to accompany his new friends.

The detachment in charge of Arkansas Pete had found the pass to which the guide was to lead them, and were left there, with orders to blockade the outlet against the enemy, and perhaps to advance into the valley, if circumstances should justify such a move. The others returned to the camp.

At the camp the wild mountaineer was at last brought to comprehend the true state of affairs. When it flashed upon his bewildered brain that

the Texans were hostile to Wiley Simmes and his vultures, and that they only wished to get into the valley to make an end of them, he gave them to understand that he knew of an opening through which they could enter without any hindrance.

This was joyful news to the Texan leaders, and Jack Scott and Arthur Lynn at once set out under his guidance, accompanied by a sufficient force of their friends.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE VENDETTA CLOSED.

WHITE WOLF led the Texans up a rugged and difficult route, and by a narrow passage through the rocky barrier that separated them from the outlaws' valley, until he rolled away a stone at the end of the passage, and let in the light of day upon them.

Passing through this opening, they found themselves on a ledge overlooking the valley—the same upon which Wiley Simmes had placed Tennie Scott and her child for safe keeping, and from which the wild mountaineer had stolen them away.

From this outlook they had a view of the entire camp of the outlaws, and of a strange but not altogether unexpected scene which was just then being acted.

Wiley Simmes had objected to the visit of Left Hand and his companion to the Texans; but he could not have prevented it, unless by a fight with his allies, and that was a move which he was not disposed to risk.

When they returned, he could easily perceive that his fears of ill results from that interview had not been groundless. The Kiowas had no explanations to give to their white allies, no report to make of what they had seen and heard. On the contrary, they kept themselves aloof from Simmes and his followers, collecting in knots and discussing their affairs among themselves, and their demeanor was certainly unfriendly, if not absolutely hostile.

The white chief believed that he understood the meaning of these proceedings, and that they foreboded the downfall of himself and his friends. But he was not a man to seek surrender or compromise, and he determined to fight out the contest to the last, against all his enemies.

He called the white men together, and explained to them the position of affairs, and from that time forward there were two camps in the valley, the occupants of each holding no communication with the other. Both parties were constantly on their guard against each other, and the rupture was of such a nature that open war might be expected at any moment.

Affairs did not come to a crisis until after the secret pass had been blockaded, and it was while White Wolf was leading the party up the cliffs that the conflict began.

Simmes and his followers perceived that the Kiowas were forming themselves for battle, and that their leaders were haranguing them, in order to bring their spirits up to the fighting pitch. The white chief knew the men with whom he had to deal, and believed that he and his followers would be able to overcome them,

and at the same time to guard the head of the pass against the Texans, provided that nothing should occur to upset his calculations. Accordingly, he posted his men so that they could receive the attack with little damage to themselves, while their new enemies would be compelled to fight in the open ground.

He had gone to the rear of this position with his son, in order to put Kate Crozier in a place of safety, when the Kiowas advanced, running and yelling, after the fashion of savage warriors.

Such was the state of affairs when the party led by White Wolf came out upon the ledge and looked down into the valley.

As soon as Arthur Lynn caught sight of Kate Crozier, and recognized Wiley Simmes and his son, he was anxious to descend the cliff and take part in the affray which was about to begin. But he was held back by Captain Scott, who persuaded him to wait for further developments.

"Let them fight a while," said the ranger. "We don't really care much which side whips. The more they kill of each other, the fewer will be left for us to kill."

Although the Kentuckian suffered himself to be thus persuaded, White Wolf was not to be so easily restrained. The sight of Wiley Simmes had raised a tempest in his breast, and he was fairly frantic in his desire to get at his enemy.

He slipped away from the Texans, and ran, with the agility of a wild animal, down the steep path that led up to the ledge. As the ball was thus opened, the Texans made haste to follow him.

At the foot of the cliff he was met by Lee Crozier, who started back in amazement at the sight of this frightful apparition. The next moment White Wolf rushed upon him, and buried a knife to its hilt in his breast.

Wiley Simmes, who had started to go back to his men, turned as the fatal blow was struck, and uttered a cry of rage and horror when he saw the fall of his son. He had no time to use a weapon, as White Wolf was upon him in an instant, and the deadly foes clinched in a mortal struggle.

Again and again the wild mountaineer struck furiously with his bloody knife; but Simmes had clutched his throat in an iron grasp, and held on with a tenacity of purpose which nothing could defeat. Before any one could interfere, White Wolf grew black in the face, the knife dropped from his nerveless hand, and he fell back lifeless. Then his enemy, exhausted by loss of blood, sunk upon the ground at his side.

The outlaws were terribly disconcerted by the fall of their chief, and by the attack in their rear of the party that had followed White Wolf down the cliff. This gave the Kiowas an advantage which they pressed to the utmost. At the same time the Texans, who had been blockading the secret pass, perceiving the turn that affairs had taken, rushed in to the assistance of their friends. The main body of the besiegers also played their part, by making a vigorous attack upon the guards at the head of the pass, which soon proved successful, and the entrance

was forced. The outlaws, attacked on all sides, were dispersed in every direction, and the Indians were left to complete the work of slaughter.

Arthur Lynn had hastened to Kate Crozier to congratulate her upon her safety, and to reassure her by giving her a brief explanation of the events that had occurred. He was so occupied by this pleasant task that he could take no part in the conflict that ensued. When it was ended, he was joined by Captain Scott, who accompanied him to the spot where White Wolf and his enemy were lying.

Wiley Simmes was still alive, and glanced up at the Kentuckian with a look of unextinguishable hatred.

"This is the end of it," he said; "but I would be even with you folks if it wasn't for the death of my poor boy."

"Tell me one thing before you go," implored Arthur. "What has become of my brothers?"

"Lift me up, then, so that I can breathe. I may as well tell you, as you would get it out of some of the others. There lies one of them"—pointing at White Wolf—"the last who came. I had my revenge out of him, though he has got me at last. The other was killed long ago. We set him up against a cliff out yonder and shot him all to pieces."

"Jack Scott!" exclaimed Arthur, grasping the hand of his friend. "It is you! You are my own brother, Reuben Lynn."

"Alive!" groaned the wounded outlaw, and that was his last word.

The rangers pardoned the crimes of the Kiowas that were left on the condition that they would go far from the settlements and never molest the white people again, and they faithfully performed their part of the contract.

The body of Wiley Simmes was buried where he fell; but those of Frank Lynn and Lee Simmes were taken to Captain Scott's plantation, where they were decently interred.

Arthur Lynn accompanied his brother to his house, with Kate Crozier and her father, the leader of the rangers becoming surety for Captain Crozier, that he should answer such charges as his neighbors might bring against him. No charges were made, however, and it was generally conceded that he had been more sinned against than sinning, and he remained in undisturbed possession of his property, the death of his brother-in-law and his nephew having cleared off all incumbrances.

Jack Scott recognized the fact that he was Reuben Lynn, although his memory could never go back beyond the time when he was found at the foot of the cliff; but he continued to be known as Jack Scott among the greater part of his old acquaintances.

As there were no attractions in Kentucky sufficient to induce Arthur Lynn to return to that State, he remained in Texas, purchasing a plantation near that of his brother, and settling down upon it with Kate Crozier as his wife.

THE END.

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